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["HAVE YOU MADE UP YOUR MIND?" SAID ROGER HYDE. "I WILL TAKE YOUR OFFER!" REPLIED SYLVIA.]

WITHOUT A REFERENCE.

CHAPTER XV.

Mrs DERING and her infirm old husband had returned to England, because, as she plaintively told her friends, "Malta did not suit him;" but, in truth, because she wished to be in London in the season, and her wishes were ever his.

She took a small, luxuriantly-furnished house in Curzon-street, with a large rent and small—very small—accommodation, and there she prepared to receive her friends, including Roger Hyde, who had obtained leave to England—had come home, by a curious coincidence, in the same steamer, and was an almost daily visitor at the house. At five o'clock you were sure to find him sitting in the tiny drawing-room, with its dim, rose-tinted light, figuratively burning incense before the lady of the house.

She employed him in many ways—to change her books at Mudie's, send her in a

supply of flowers and plants, and he went her errands to the stores. He also gave her tickets to concerts, boxes at the opera, and was quite invaluable; but he was not a quarter so attentive to his rich old uncle, who lived in Portland-square.

Mr. Robert Hyde was excessively proud of his smart, good-looking nephew, and liked to exhibit him arm-in-arm with him in the park, to have him to dine at his club, and to do a theatre afterwards.

Roger fought shy of his relative's society, and made the most surprising and ingenious excuses. His uncle was a parvenu, and loved a lord with all his heart and soul. To his great grief his acquaintance was limited; but the few noblemen he did know were seemingly ever in his mind, and their names often on his tongue. He delighted to button-hole an acquaintance, and talk to him about "my intimate friend the Earl of Scaraway," or "my dear old chum the Marquis of Borohester;" and my second self, the Duc de Fleury.

In his heart he knew very well that his acquaintance with any of these was small, and his listeners knew it too; but they

dissembled—for old Hyde was rich, gave wonderful dinners, and had one of the best cellars in London; but Roger Hyde's acquaintance with the upper ten was not imaginary. He was "hand and glove," as his uncle said, with half the young nobles in town.

His mother had been well-born. Poor, and proud—she had married money, but had not lived long enough to enjoy it. Her relatives had looked after Roger in his youth, and given him all they could endow him with—somewhat grand ideas, and fastidious tastes—and his rich uncle, delighted with his off-hand air, bold handsome face, and gentlemanly manners, had sent him to Eton, and put him into the army, with a good allowance. He was gratified to hear that young Hyde was the best polo player in his regiment, a capital cricketer, and quite a wonder at "Snooker's"—after mess on guest nights that he sang a good song, and was a most sporting and popular fellow.

This was all very pleasant. Now Roger must pay his uncle for all his outlay, and for the fun he had had, by making a first-class match. An Earl's daughter, she must be—

Lady is her own right; but it did not matter if she had not sixpence in her pocket.

Robert Hyde had an ample fortune, and he would give a good share of it to have the pleasure of talking to "my niece, Lady Mary, Ethel, or Blanche Hyde."

It filled him with a glow of pride, as he stood in his club window, to see Master Roger strolling past arm-in-arm with some young sprig of nobility, or to be able to point him out at a theatre and say,—

"Hello! Look at that young chap of mine down in the stalls, sitting between Lord Killiorankie and Sir Julian Rashley."

He had been looking up the peerage and making inquiries, and had already secretly composed a list of a dozen young ladies who would "do." He insisted on conveying Roger to dances, for which he had exerted himself to get invitations, and stood in doorways, like some proud old dowager, watching his nephew making himself agreeable to, and dancing with, the prettiest girls in the room.

It was Roger's way to make himself agreeable to all women, more especially if they were young and pretty; and his uncle, not knowing this characteristic, built a superb castle in the air, in his attentions to Lady Muriel Lacklands.

Alas! this castle was doomed to be dashed down, like a house of cards. He had the bad luck to sit beside two dowagers (old friends and gossip); and, as one of them was slightly deaf, he could not help hearing their conversation, and they treated their neighbour as if he had no more intelligence than a pillar. What did this pious, little red-faced man, with shaggy red eyebrows mean by coming to balls, and taking up room on sofas? After a good deal of conversation, in which he had no interest, he picked up his cane on hearing that magic spell to everyone—their own names.

"Hyde, young Hyde, I wonder he is here! I wonder he comes to any house where he is not likely to meet her!"

"You mean Mrs. Dering?" said the dowager, with a smile.

"Who else should I mean? I wonder she allows him so much liberty."

"Oh! she has to. He has to keep up appearances. He cannot be always there, and he is quite dependent on his uncle—a millionaire—who wants to make a brilliant match—an old paragon in fallow!"

"And who, of course, has never heard a word about Mrs. D." raising her painted eyebrows.

"No, not likely! He would put a stop to her game. She is a designing wretch. You know she is old Dering's second wife, and, for all her grand airs, a mere nobody. Her father was a bookmaker, and Dering's grown-up family by his first wife won't have anything to say to her; and, once he dies, she relapses into comparative poverty. All his money is settled on his children. He can only leave her his savings, and they can't be much!"

"No. That must amount to nothing at all. Look at her dress, and her diamonds, and her carriages!"

"I am told that Roger Hyde gave her that diamond necklace," said the other, confidentially.

"Oh!" drawing down the corners of her mouth. "She is a cunning woman. She keeps a correct appearance before the world as a model wife; and yet, as soon as she is a widow, she knows where to find a rich, good-looking fool, years younger than herself, who will be her second husband, and she will make his money fly!"

"His only chance is to fly now," said the other, with a laugh.

"But she won't let him. She is a regular spider, and he is fast in her web. He is fascinated like a poor fly, and there is no escape. And now to turn to another topic. Is it true that Lady Earl's second girl, that they say is painting in Italy, is, in reality, in a mad house near Blackheath?"

Mr. Hyde had been listening attentively.

His face was purple, with difficulty he restrained his passion from breaking out openly.

So this was where Roger spent his time, in the little house in Curzon-street, when he believed him to be at Sandown races with Lord Shetland, or spending a few days down near Ascot with the young Marquis of Carrabas. Instead of which he was running after a bookmaker's daughter, a married woman, and an adventuress, buying her diamonds too!

And this was the reason he was so cool about marrying, retiring from the army, and settling down. And this beast of a woman kept him tied to her apron, and meant to marry him, and live on his (Robert Hyde's) money. Well, he would see about that!

Roger was rather surprised to find that his uncle had gone home before him, for generally he left late, and was also surprised when he dropped in to luncheon two days later at Portland-square, and to ask for a cheque—which was always willingly granted—to find his uncle very grumpy; and as to the cheque, he said he would "see about it"—a most unusual remark.

He declined his uncle's offer to take him for a turn in the park.

"And why could he not come?" he asked, crossly.

"Because he had an engagement."

"An engagement where?" harshly.

"To go down to Hurlingham with a friend."

"Man or woman?"

"Why, a man, of course. Seton, of the Scots Greys."

"Then I won't keep you. Don't let me detain you," with a sneer.

Roger thought his uncle's manner queer, but never divined the cause. It was the result of a touch of gout or indigestion that made him a little "short."

He was not in Roger's own rather fast, smart set, and he could not possibly hear of Mrs. Dering elsewhere. The set is as separate as if one was in America and the other in Melbourne, and he was safe, so he thought.

The instant he had rattled off in a hansom his uncle hailed another, and told the driver to follow.

He had not far to go. Hansom number one drew up in Curzon-street, and Mr. Hyde got out and went into Wolmerhausen's on pretence of an order, and waited and waited.

No. 402 was the number. In a short time a pretty victoria came to the door which opened, and out sailed a tall, splendidly-dressed woman, with fair hair and a white parasol, and Roger, and drove away.

Mr. Hyde followed them to Hurlingham. He went inside and remained at a distance. He saw his foolish nephew plying this adventuress with wine and ices, and holding her parasol with reverent care. He saw looks and smiles and nods—knowing nods and raised brows—among Roger's friends. He saw enough. He went to the gate and singled out Mrs. Dering's coachman, and said—

"I suppose you often drive that gentleman?"

The man reddened and said nothing, merely stared the black stare of a well-trained servant.

"You need not be afraid to speak. He is my nephew, and here's a tip for you," offering a sovereign. "I dare say he has had many a pleasant drive behind that smart pair of cobs?"

"Well, sir, I expect he has. He and my master are old friends, and I drive him most days."

Master, indeed!

"So I supposed. You need not mention that I have been talking to you," and he walked away.

For several days he nursed his wrath to keep it warm—not that it needed much nursing; and then, learning that Mr. Dering was dangerously ill, he sent for his nephew, who came most unobsequiously to dinner, and was still anxious about his cheque.

When the servants had left the room—after a singularly gloomy meal—Mr. Hyde said sharply,—

"And so old Dering is dying!"

If a bomb had exploded before Roger on the table he could not have been more startled. He was speechless.

"It's true, eh? They say he can't last a week?"

"I did not know you knew him," faltered the other.

"Oh, I know a great deal more than you imagine. I know where you go when you pretend you are going to Lord's, or Kew, or Sandown. I saw the man you took to Hurlingham, you unmitigated young liar!" lashing himself into a fury as he spoke.

Roger turned white. He, too, had a bad temper, but he knew he had lied freely to his uncle, and felt ashamed of the fact. Lying did not come natural to him—excepting about her.

"What have you to say, sir?" shouted the other.

"All is fair in love and war," muttered Roger.

"Love! Child stealing, you mean! She is old enough to be your mother—a married woman—a penniless, scheming adventuress—a bookmaker's daughter!" flaming at the mouth as he spoke. "If you marry her you will never see a shilling of my money—and that I swear. I'd sooner endow a home for dogs, or a lunatic asylum."

"Of course I can't marry anyone on my pay."

"No, I should think not. And now I'll clinch the matter. You are a slippery customer; and you think, I dare say, you could marry her, and then talk me round. I'll have no more shilly-shallying to put you out of danger. I give you a chance, sir. If you are married in three months from to-day—not to a widow—I will trouble your allowance, settle ten thousand on her, and buy you a place in the country. If, on the other hand, by this day three months you are still a bachelor, you can try how you like living on Montecarlo's pay—one hundred and twenty pounds a year—and finding out of that quarters, mess bill, band, regimental subscriptions, clothes, uniform, washing, and wages, for you will never get another penny from me!"

Roger stared at his uncle in stupefaction. Had he gone mad? Had he taken too much port wine? No, he seemed quite sane and sensible, and terribly in earnest.

"Why should you force me to marry, whether I will or not? I have lots of time. I am only five-and-twenty. You never married at all."

"I force you to marry because you are a weak-minded young idiot! And if I don't see you safely tied up you will be made a fool of. Have you asked that Dering woman to marry you?"

"What! and her husband alive?"

"That's no answer, you shuffling rascal! Have you, or have you not, on your honour as a gentleman?"

"On my honour, as a gentleman, I have not!"

"You admire her?"

"Certainly I do! I adore her! She is the best and purest, as she is the most beautiful, woman in the world!"

"There, there, spare me that trash, for goodness sake! She is a scheming, painted Jezebel, and forty, if she is an hour!"

"I will not listen to a word against her!" cried Roger, jumping to his feet, and boiling with passion.

"Very well then. You had better ring for a hansom and go, for I shall say what I please at my own table. We had better not meet until we have cooled down a bit; and, remember, I will only give you three months from to-day, and no widows. Many a young man would jump at my offer!"

"Kick it from him, you rascal!" said his nephew. "I am my own master. This is a

free country. No man is compelled to marry by order. I am no slave!"

"Yes, you are—a slave to the luxuries and refinements of life, to public opinion, and to Robert Hyde, who likes a good clab, good eating, good chess! And now I'll wish you good-night!"

CHAPTER XVI.

ROGER walked back to his lodgings in Jermyn-street in a towering passion. He had a hot temper—such as generally goes with Auburn hair, and many a rash act had it cost him, acts which he had invariably reason to regret.

In spite of his uncle's mandate he repaired to Curzon-street next day. The blinds were down; there was crape on the knocker. Mr. Dering was dead. The house, had he but known it, was full of Mr. Dering's family, and matters were not very comfortable for his handsome widow. He wrote her a note of condolence; and a few days later he received a letter from her, begging him to call on her in a private hotel in Kensington.

He found her very composed, dressed in deep and most becoming weeds. She had left Curzon-street. The cruelty and unkindness of her step-children was beyond belief; and now that she was a widow, and left badly off, she had but few friends she could count on, but she counted on him, she explained with well-feigned emotion.

"Yes, she might always do so," he assured her eagerly. "Whether rich or poor I shall always be at your service."

"Poor!" with an incredulous smile. "You can never be poor!"

"Can I not? My uncle is an odd man, you know. He has taken it into his head that I must marry."

"Of course you must marry," she answered, with decision.

"And within three months!" in a heart-broken tone.

"In three months!" she echoed, with a start, and mentally asked herself, dare she venture to brave Mrs. Grundy to that extent. Before he could tell her any further details another visitor was announced, and he had no opportunity of speaking with her again alone that day, nor for several weeks.

She was laid up with diphtheria, and then she went down to Dover for a change; and when there she sent for him, and he ran down for the day, and waited on her in her cheery lodgings in Waterloo-pier. She looked paler and much pulled down and aged—yes, aged. She might now be taken for thirty-five, though, of course, she was nothing like that, he remarked to himself.

"Well," she said, as she leant back in an arm-chair in the bow window, facing him, "What is your news? How have you been?"

"Very anxious about you," he answered, promptly.

"Yes, I suppose so, and it was very, very good of you to send those lovely flowers, and all sorts of nice things, and all the new magazines when I was getting better! Of course I could not write, much less see you, for fear of the infection; but the moment I came down and was out of quarantine, I sent for you, as you see."

"Yes," he answered moodily.

"And what news of your wicked old uncle? Is not the three months nearly up?"

"Is it," he returned, stolidly.

"Are you not nervous? What is the penalty?"

"The penalty, if I am not married by the twentieth November, is that I am cut off with the traditional shilling."

"What?" she echoed, half-rising to her feet.

"Yes, I believe he means it."

"And if you do marry?" she inquired.

"My allowance tripled, a place purchased for me, and a thousand pounds settled exclusively on Mrs. Roger Hyde."

Mrs. Dering coloured. After all she would show over Mrs. Grundy. They would be married quite quietly in Dover at the parish church. Just walk in some morning before breakfast at the Lord-Warden, and cross to Dover by the one o'clock boat. No one would ask to see the date of their wedding, and they could return to England in a year's time, quite an old Darby and Joan. Ten thousand pounds settled on her, that was not bad; and Roger, what a good-looking boy he was! She had not played her cards ill, after all. Her own income was a bare three hundred per annum—a mere trifle to a lady of her extravagant tastes, and out of the question for her to live on it. She would be married in grey, second morning, a neat travelling gown, and get her trousseau in Paris. All these ideas flooded through her brain in about two minutes, whilst Roger sat in unaccustomed silence, his face unusually grave, his eyes bent on the grey October sea.

"Well, Roger?" she asked, with an assumed smile. "And have you made up your mind? Who is she to be?"

"There is one person she must not be," he said, in a half-strangled voice.

"And that is?" with smiling interrogation.

"A widow."

A silence, during which she gazed at him with a pair of incredulous eyes staring out of a white, blank face.

"What? Explain!" she said, hoarsely.

"He said he made one stipulation—no widow!"

"He—he must have heard or suspected something."

"He had heard of you—he said so."

And all Mrs. Dering's visions were dispelled at one fell stroke.

She took some time in trying to realise the position; and her visitor said at last,—

"I may not marry the only woman in the world; and I shall not marry anyone else!"

"What! and be disinherited? Nonsense! Not to be thought of. I am your best friend, and I give you a friend's advice. Is there any other stipulation?"

"None."

"Then marry. Take him at his word, and choose someone who will nobly avenge you and me."

"I have only a fortnight left. Who would marry me in that time?" he asked, scornfully.

"Plenty of girls. And now, as your time is so short, and your object so important, I won't keep you. You shall have some tea, and go back by the five o'clock train, so as to begin your search for a wife early to-morrow."

"But I don't want a wife."

"Do you want to be a pauper?" losing patience.

"Instead of dawdling, to have to walk; instead of riding, ditto? Shabby clothes, cold meat, water to drink? My dear, good Roger, if you try it for a week you will soon grow tired of poverty. You can never stay in the service. I am sure I don't know what is to become of you?"

"Never mind me; but tell me your plans?" he pleaded.

"Oh, I shall stay here and recruit. Then I shall go abroad for a while. And I shall expect, long before that, to hear of your marriage. Don't let any sentimental ideas stand in the way of your actual existence; and, maybe, some day your wife and I will be very good friends."

"Not likely!" sharply, called by the indifference she had shown to his news.

"Pray, why not?"

"When are you and any lady ever friends?"

"Now, Roger, if you are going to be disagreeable, I shall send you away. As it is, you have only half-an-hour to have a cup of tea and get to the station."

Whilst Roger was in Dover—or, rather, travelling from that seaport—his uncle, who happened to be in the neighbourhood of Jermyn-street, thought he would look in and see if he was at home.

He was shown up to his sitting-room—a carelessly arranged, comfortable apartment. The chimney-piece was covered with notes, invitation cards, and pipes. Some Moorish rugs lay on the floor, and Moorish brass trays stood on a cabinet. There was a sporting paper on the table, an army paper, a half-smoked cigarette, and an open telegram!

Mr. Robert Hyde perused it without the smallest compunction or a moment's hesitation. It ran thus,—

"Mrs. Dering, 9, Waterloo-crescent, Dover—to Roger Hyde, 520 Jermyn street, London."

"Come to me to-day. Am longing to see you."

"And that's where he is; and much good it shall do him!" said the old gentleman, assuming about the room. "I wash my hands of him! I'll out him off! So much for bringing up other people's children!"

At that unpropitious moment the door opened, and the prodigal nephew walked in, in hat and overcoat, with a damp evening paper in his hand.

"Well, sir," said the visitor, squaring up to him. "I suspect that I know where you have been. To see that woman in Dover. Now, no lies—have you?"

"Yes, I have," he rejoined, with flashing eyes.

"Are you married to her?"

"No, I am not. I wish I was!"

"Wish you were! Very well! Mind you, I am a man of my word, and I'll keep my promise, you young rascal! You marry, or you'll be a pauper by this day fortnight. I'll be hanged! I've pampered you too much, you young puppy!"

"And who am I to marry, pray? Perhaps you will do the courting and proposing yourself, since I have no will, and you have rather the law into your own hands?" said Roger, furiously.

"Anyone you like, and be hanged to you! Anyone sooner than that white-faced schemer. A beggar of the streets, if you choose, as long as she is a lady."

"Eh," with a queer tightening of the lips. "A beggar out of the streets! You are a man of your word, remember. Since you are so determined I am to marry I shall marry. Yes, you shall have a niece by this day fortnight," looking at him with a strange expression.

"See that I have, then," said the elder man, shaking with rage, and snatching up his hat with a trembling hand. "If not, you never see me or a penny of my money again."

"You have not given me much time, you know," said the other, also in a towering passion; "but as long as it is not a widow, she will do, I suppose?"

"As long as she's not a widow, a woman years older than yourself, a painted Jezebel. I don't care if she is the devil," and with this rash statement he flung himself out of the room, clattered downstairs, and banged the door in a manner that shook the windows in their sashes.

His nephew watched at the window, and looked after him with wrathful eyes.

"I am to marry whether I like it or no, and within a fortnight, or I am to be a beggar. By Jove! I'll pay him out. If I'm not a beggar I'll marry one—the first decent-looking pauper I see in the street. He wants a niece, a lady of title, who will reflect credit on him, and as I am not likely to get hold of one immediately, and he is afraid of Mrs. Dering, I am to be chained up in matrimony to some one at once. I'll go out and look for the future Mrs. Roger this very moment. No time like the present, and no time to lose!"

His passion was more lasting than his uncle's, if not so loud and violent, and his mind was in a ferment of fury as he walked onwards, he scarcely knew where. As he could not marry the only woman he cared two straws about it did not matter who he gave his hand to. They would part outside the registry office. She, having secured him his future prospects, and he, giving her his name

and a certain weekly allowance, it would be entirely a matter of business, and a terrible punishment for his uncle, never casting a thought at the future punishment he might be storing up for himself, or that he was foolishly bent on cutting off his nose to spite his face.

Why did he not go and call on some of his uncle's wealthy friends, with families of unmarried daughters, and woo and win and wed some good-looking, well-educated city girl, who would not be averse to such a hurried wedding, with such an eligible and good-looking bridegroom? He never cast a thought to the Misses Gollisack, or the Misses Hart or the Misses Brown-White, but turned into the Strand that dull November afternoon to meet his fate; and she met him, or, rather, accosted him—a poor, starved-looking girl, with a box of matches in her hand.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Buy some matches, please, sir?" said a low voice close to him. It was not the usual street whine. It was a cultivated accent, with a ring of despair in its pleading.

He halted, and looked hard at the girl. She was keeping close to the shadow of the houses, as if ashamed to be seen—a slight, thin creature, with a shawl over her head, tendering four match boxes in an all but skeleton hand. Her face was stamped with the word starvation! Her cheeks were hollow, her nose and cheek-bones prominent, her eyes cavernous.

"Buy some matches! four boxes a penny, sir!" she repeated, faintly, "and for Heaven's sake—"

As he looked at her sharply her languid eyes brightened. Sara Parr, the famished match-seller, had recognised a familiar face—the face of the man who rescued her in the streets of Valetta.

Would he know her again? No, not he. The episode of Mrs. Plummer's maid had almost faded from his memory, and he barely recalled her as seen by the street lamps, as a tall, handsome girl with an erect carriage, and a pair of fine grey eyes. He never dreamt of connecting her with this wan, sharp-featured match-seller.

The suppressed misery in her voice touched him. He put his hand in his pocket and found a florin, which he gave her.

"I have no change!" she faltered.

"I don't want any. Keep it, and the matches too!"

"Please take the matches?" offering him her wholestock. "Please do?"

"My good girl, what on earth would I do with a dozen boxes of matches? You seem badly off. Keep them yourself!"

"Thank you, sir. I am in great straits, or I would not accept charity. Only—"

"You speak like a gentlewoman," he interrupted, suddenly. "Are you a lady?"

"I was brought up as one," she said, tremulously. "I have had a good education."

"Will you walk alongside of me for a moment. I want to ask you a question or two if you don't mind answering. How old are you?"

"I am nineteen!"

"And married?"

"No. Oh, no!"

"Nor likely to be?"

"Nor likely to be!" she echoed, emphatically.

"Will you come down with me to the Temple station? I want to make you a proposition."

The girl took the turning without a word. Had it been anyone but Mr. Roger Hyde she would have shaken him off, and hurried away to buy bread and tea with that blessed two shillings.

She was so hungry, so faint with want, she could scarcely keep up with her companion, who strode away in silence, and hurried down the steps to the Underground ahead of her, his mind in a blaze of a new idea, and a project of revenge.

This beggar was a lady. She was young, and unmarried. She fulfilled the conditions to a T. Once below he said,—

"Come and sit here on one of these seats, I want to talk to you seriously for five minutes, and we cannot do that in the street, and if I took you into a confectioner's—"

"You would be ashamed to be seen with me!" she supplemented.

"No; but I can talk better here. You see before you a man who will soon be in your own plight—selling matches or begging bread."

She uttered a faint exclamation.

"And my only way out of my present fix is to marry!"

She was silent. Why was he telling her this? He was perfectly sober—then he must be mad!

"My uncle, a rich man, has brought me up as his heir. He has taken it into his head that I want to marry a widow whom he hates. To prevent that he has ordered me to provide myself with a wife by a certain date—that is, in a fortnight's time. She must be young—younger than myself, a lady, and not previously a wife. You embody everything—will you marry me?"

"I—!" a long pause. "You must be joking?" rising as she spoke.

"No, never more serious in all my life," detaining her for a moment by her shawl. "It's a precious grave business for me. Where am I to lay my hand on a girl in society who would marry me in such a short time? If I had six weeks—but I have only twelve days—and it's only a matter of form. We meet and marry before the registrar of your parish and go our several ways. We need never meet again," he said, consolingly.

"And what would be the good of this to either of us?"

"Much. In the first place, you need no longer sell matches in the street. You would have a comfortable home over your head, good food, and good clothes. I would naturally support you, and make you an allowance paid regularly."

"And for you?" she inquired, sharply.

"For me? I shall not be out off with a shilling. I shall continue in the service. I shall still be my uncle's heir, and enjoy the good things of life, once I can procure my marriage certificate, and show him that I have carried out his orders."

"But won't he wish to see me?" she said, slowly.

"No, it is not in the bond. I suppose he forgot it. I am not bound to produce the lady. My leave is up. I am going back to Malta in three weeks. No chance of an extension; and now it is time for me to tell you my name. It is Roger Hyde. I am a Lieutenant in the Royal Privateers, now stationed at Valetta. The only two things I care much about are my regiment, and—and this lady that I cannot marry. I have to give her up, for I could not drag her into beggary; and I don't want to give up the other, and I must unless I become a Benedict within a stated time."

Sara ran her mind quickly over the suggestion, and tried to look at it clearly from every point of view. Poor starved girl! Her mental faculties were sharpened by hunger on one side, plenty and comfort for her dying friend. No more cold streets and bare struggle for existence, verging on absolute want. No more rage and match-selling and misery and hunger, and near prospect of grim death. No more thoughts of the river as her own end when Jessie would have passed away.

And for this she was to exchange the hopes that all girls have of love, happiness and marriage. This marriage was a mere form. And after all, why not abandon what was never likely to be hers? Who would care for—in her own status—a gaunt, starved creature like herself?

She might easily resign her prospects. She thought, with a faint smile, she had better grasp the substance and abandon the shadow.

Once lifted out of dire poverty and debt she might prosecute her researches with respect to Mr. Paake. Without money, or clothes, or friends she was powerless. This eager-eyed young man was her stepping-stone to all. And then, though she was actually making a sordid bargain, and selling, so to speak, her birthright for a mess of pottage, that same mess of pottage would save her from famishing, and soften the last hours of her only friend at this side of the grave, poor Jessie, who had only had a stale crust of bread soaked in water the whole of that day, who had no fire in her room, no light, and only one thin blanket on her bed.

"Well, you are taking a good while to make up your mind," said young Hyde. "You are evidently not going to jump at my offer?"

"No, but I will consider it. You think you are granting me an enormous favour, I suppose? You see me, shabby, cold, and half-starved, a beggar in the streets, without a coin in the world except what you have given me; but I am telling you, to save you from poverty, much that a woman, a young woman, holds dear. I can never, I must never, know love or a lover, or a husband, or a home, of my own free will, to bestow myself in marriage. I am not much to bestow, but I must think before I take so tremendous a step, for you and me. Supposing, some day, you see some one you wish to marry?" she suggested dryly.

"Not I," very firmly. "That is all over for me."

"What? Why, you can't be more than three-and-twenty?"

"Five-and-twenty last birthday. And some day you may meet some one you would like to spend your life with. How will that be?"

"The chance is small; and, such as it is, I must give it up. But please leave me for a few minutes whilst I think. In my case, the flesh is willing to clinch your bargain—oh, so willing—but the spirit holds back."

"Well, I will leave you for ten minutes to yourself, and then you will be able to tell me yea or nay."

He rose and walked over to the bookstall and bought an evening paper, and read it quite composedly, whilst she paced up and down in the dim, darkest end of the platform, lost to view in clouds of steam and smoke, and as she walked, she said to herself,—

"Shall I agree? Shall I do it—shall I?"

After all, she had two shillings. They need not starve for several days, yes. But after that?

She might again go out selling matches, and with what success. How many had she sold that day?

Providence had thrown this offer in her way. It would be wicked to reject it. After all, she would never probably see this Roger Hyde again, and she was saving him from beggary in the future. If he saved her from starvation in the present, they would at least be quits. She would say "yes."

In ten minutes' time they met once more on the bench—under Pears' advertisement of scented soap—and he said,—

"Have you made up your mind?"

"Yes. I will take your offer."

"Good."

"With a few words on my side first, please."

"All right. Fire away!" he said, impetuously.

"After the compact we need never meet, need we?"

"No, but I must know your whereabouts."

"Very well, you shall."

"And I will pay you ten pounds a month without fail, and open an account for you at my bankers, who will pay the money to your address."

"The half will be sufficient in future, but I must have fifty pounds at once."

"Yes, for clothes, of course," glancing at her dress.

"No, for necessities. For debt, for coal, and light and food—for a friend, who is dying."

"Male or female?" rather sharply.

"A girl, my own age. Only for her sake I would never do it; no, never."

"And where do you live?" not noticing her remark.

"Forwood's rectory, Ashford-court, White-chapel."

He scribbled the address down on his shirt cuff, and then said,—

"Your name, please?"

She hesitated, and then answered,—

"Sylvia Pasko."

"Which you will retain, I suppose?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"Just as you please, as long as you are legally Sylvia Hyde. Pasko! Surely I know the name!"

"I must go now," she said hastily.

"Wait a second or two. This is Friday. We can be married on next Friday at the nearest registry office to your diggings. Please find it out, and send me a line to the Junior Army and Navy, will you?"

"Very well."

"I'll meet you there at whatever hour you name."

"Yes."

"And meanwhile you will want money. Here are five sovereigns, and a five-pound note. 'Lucky I had them. I won at whist at the club yesterday. Afterwards, we will arrange all details; and now I won't detain you any longer. Good-bye.'"

"Good-bye," she said, and flitted away like a ghost.

And so that shabby, emaciated female in the shawl and black skirt was the future Mrs. Roger Hyde! A pity his uncle could not see her. In allying himself to such a scarecrow he felt that he was guilty of no disloyalty to the queen of his heart, his peerless enchantress, Marion Dering.

Foolish young man. Had he but known the real truth, he had that hour made a splendid bargain; and Marion Dering—*passé, blind, scheming, Sybarite*, with her sham emotions, sham age, sham complexion, was not worthy to kneel down and black Sylvia Pasko's broken, patched old shoes!

(To be continued.)

THE MILLIONAIRE'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XL.

"I do not know how I should get along without you, Miss Saville," Nelly would declare, weepingly, over and over again. "You are a veritable angel in the house; and, then too, your untiring devotion to my poor brother Ralph I shall not soon forget."

When they were seated by his bedside, they would have to listen for long hours to his ravings of the beautiful love which had brightened his life for a time and was then suddenly lost to him.

At such times Nelly always noticed that Miss Saville would turn away weeping.

Nelly secretly made up her mind to one thing, and that was, when her brother recovered she would quietly ask him why he did not marry Dora. She would tell him, too, that she knew that she cared for him, and how she wept over him during his illness, patiently tending him early and late with a devotion that was heroic.

She would have been pleased if Dora would but have made a confidante of her, but this she certainly showed no disposition to do. She would not speak of her past life; even the slightest allusion to it brought a look of the deepest pain to her noble face.

What could the secret be that lay hidden in her breast?

In a fortnight the crisis had passed, and the doctor gave forth the encouraging assurance that he would live.

"You owe your recovery to the untiring patience of your nurse, Miss Saville," he added, laughingly. "It is her you must thank instead of me."

When Ralph found himself alone with Dora he held out his hand feebly to her.

"You have been a devoted and true friend to me, Dora," he said. "I—I appreciate it; but, oh, why did you not let me die?—why did you let me struggle back to a life so orribly desolate when death would have ended it all?"

To Vesta those days wandering about the great city in search of work were the darkest hours of her life. After the fourth day of vain endeavour she went back to her friend more discouraged than ever.

"I am sorry I came to this great city," she said, with a sob. "There seemed to be thousands of people walking the streets, and all in search of something to do to keep them from dire starvation. I could read it in their pinched, pale faces. Oh, what shall I do, I wonder?" and Vesta bowed her pretty head and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

"I will send you with a letter to a large millinery establishment that I know of. I once rendered a most valuable service to the proprietor's wife, and I do not think she will refuse to take you in if I particularly request it. You could find worse things to do than fashioning dainty bonnets."

Vesta smiled faintly.

"I have always like trimming hats," she said; and she thought of the pretty little flower and lace affairs which she used to twist up for herself, and which actually looked tastier than the three-guinea Leghorns with their costly plumes that were ordered for her.

"You will take this to the lady in charge of the place—Madame Vyse. She knows my influence with the firm and she will be sure to take you in. She will make a place for you if she has no vacancy."

"You are more than good!" murmured Vesta.

"I have only written a few words, but I think they will prove sufficient; and she read aloud the following:—

"MY DEAR MADAME—

"This note will be handed you by Miss Vesta South, whom I desire to present to you. She is desirous of entering your employ; and I may add, in conclusion, that any kindness you may show this young girl will be duly appreciated by me.

(Signed)

"ANNE BLAKE."

"Will that answer?" she asked, holding it up for inspection.

"Yes—and thank you very much!" murmured the girl, gratefully.

Madame Vyse was more than pleased with the quiet manners and ladylike appearance of Vesta. She engaged her at once, and the salary agreed upon was considerably more than that given to beginners.

"I shall want you in the show-room, Miss South," she said. "You have just such a face as will set off our dainty lace and rosebud capotes this year. A customer, to see a hat on you, would be sure to take it at once."

Although thankful that she had found a situation, it was not without a great sinking of the heart that Vesta followed the young girl whom Madame had summoned to conduct her to the show-room.

"Other girls are proud of earning their own living, why should not I be?" she thought, reproaching herself for her timidity.

The room was thronged with fashionably attired ladies in their rustling silks and glittering diamonds as Vesta entered.

It did not take long for Vesta to learn her duties, and her quiet, graceful manner made friends for her among the workgirls as well as the customers.

The day was nearly over when an event happened which Vesta never forgot until her dying hour.

Two young ladies had stepped into the show-room, and had requested to be shown hats.

"I want something very elegant," said the younger and prettier of the two; "the price is no object if it is only stylish."

The obsequious forewoman was only too pleased to bring out her latest designs, one of which rather pleased the ladies.

"You shall see it tried on one of our prettiest young girls, then you can judge of the effect. Miss South," she exclaimed, raising her voice, "will you step this way, please, and put on this hat?"

One of the young ladies had started visibly when the name was called.

Vesta advanced timidly, and as she did so her eyes fell upon the face of the younger lady, and a cry of dismay broke from her lips.

"Clare!" she gasped.

Yes, it was Clare, one of her old chums at Madame Rowland's boarding-school, and the surprise Vesta experienced in seeing her almost took her breath away.

Miss Vernon recognised her instantly. In some manner she had heard of Vesta's great downfall, and that she had come on to London to find something to do.

But Vesta South the great heiress and Vesta South the milliner's apprentice were two very different persons in Miss Vernon's eyes.

She looked for one moment into Vesta's face; then with a cold, hard, stony stare she drew her slender figure up to its full height.

"I beg your pardon," she said, idly, "you have the advantage of me. I was not aware that I had any acquaintances among the London shopgirls. You are evidently mistaken," and with a proud gesture she turned and swept with a haughty tread from the grand show-rooms, her head erect, her eyes blazing, and with a scornful sneer on her red lips.

"The idea of a shopgirl claiming acquaintance with me!" she exclaimed to her companion, loud enough for every one to hear as she walked along. "I—I shall never come into this place again as long as I live!"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! why did you claim to know the lady, Miss South?" cried the forewoman, coming quickly forward. "Madame Vyse will be so very, very angry. That was Miss Vernon, one of the wealthiest young ladies we have on our books. Why, she pays us fabulous prices for hats if they happen to please. Dear, dear! I wouldn't have had it occur for anything!"

Poor Vesta—poor hapless girl! how the bars of sunlight from the long stained windows and the score or more of elegantly-dressed ladies grouped here and there seemed to whirl around her! The hum of suppressed laughter fell like demoniac shrieks on her ears.

She could see the people about her gazing at her with scorn and contempt. Vesta sank down into the nearest seat and great tears gathered in her dark eyes, and fell like rain down her pale cheeks. All the brightness seemed stricken from her face in one short moment, as a cruel blast of lightning blasts a tender blossom.

At that moment a message came for her that Madame Vyse wished to see her in her private office without delay.

Three or four of the girls crowded about Vesta, pityingly.

"We are all so sorry for you, Miss South. Of course she has made a complaint at the office, and the result is you will be discharged. Miss Clare Vernon is haughty to a fault. She might be gracious enough with one of us in here, but let one of us so much as look at her in the street and she will stare at us with a glance that would fairly freeze the marrow in our bones. There's lots of 'em that comes here that's the same way."

"We—we—were schoolmates together only one short year ago—schoolmates and chums," sobbed Vesta, rising slowly from her chair to answer Madame Vyse's summons.

"That does not matter," returned one of the girls. "No doubt you were in better circumstances then. People never care, or never take the trouble to ask who you were, but they only look at what you are at present,

and measure you, and their acquaintance with you, by that."

Vesta walked slowly to the office.

Madame Vyse was seated in deep meditation in her large leather office-chair before her desk, with her head resting on one hand.

She looked up as Vesta entered.

"Sit down, Miss South," she said, indicating a chair in close proximity. "I want to talk with you."

Vesta complied.

"I have just heard of your attempted familiarity with one of my patrons. You erred gravely, and lost me a valuable customer. But it is not of this that I wish to speak to you. First, let me know how long you have known my friend, Mrs. Blake?"

Vesta looked at her in puzzling wonder.

"How long?" she repeated in bewilderment. "Why, a very short time, madame."

"How did you come to know her?" Madame Vyse, asked pointedly.

"I met her through the goodness of heart of her son—the young gentleman in the ticket or telegraph office at the station," murmured Vesta.

"Will you explain your words more fully?" asked madame, more severely. "You made her acquaintance through her son, I understand you to say?"

"Yes, madame," faltered Vesta, greatly wondering at the drift of all this questioning.

"I should like to ask—although it is entirely at your option as to whether you will answer or not, still I feel it my duty to probe this affair to the very bottom if possible, therefore I ask: What are you to Mrs. Blake's son?"

It was now Vesta's turn to look bewildered.

"I really do not understand you, madame," answered the girl, raising her lovely, dark, mystified eyes to the madame's stern face with simple dignity. "I am nothing to Mrs. Blake's son, nor have I ever been," she answered.

"May I ask how you became acquainted with the young man?"

"Certainly," responded Vesta. "I fainted in the depot, and when I recovered I found him supporting my head. He took me to his home, and his mother received me kindly."

"Do you mean to tell me deliberately that the young man took an entire stranger, to whom he had rendered but a slight ordinary service, to his home, and that his mother was satisfied with that version of an explanation?"

"He could give no other one, madame," responded Vesta.

"Probably that was the best one," returned Madame Vyse, dryly. "And according to your story, I surmise that Mrs. Blake, who gave you a letter here, knows absolutely nothing of you or your past history, and has known you but a few days?"

"You are entirely correct in your surmise, madame," replied Vesta, humbly.

CHAPTER XL.

"THEN I can but say that she has noted most imprudently in this matter," said madame, slowly. "I shall write a note to her, telling her so."

Vesta sprung to her feet, her face deathly white. She had just begun to realise the drift of her companion's remarks.

"Madame Vyse," she cried, sharply, "what do you—what can you mean? Surely you do not dare bring anything against me? Heaven would never find pardon for you if you did."

"Softly, softly, Miss South," said madame. "Pray do not get excited while you are in my private office. I never permit it. Speaking of bringing anything against you I simply say. How can you refute the charges concerning you contained in this note handed me a few moments since?" and as she uttered the words she drew from one of the compartments of her desk a little three-cornered note—just such a one as Vesta had seen everyone receive to whom she had ever applied for work.

Madame smoothed it out slowly, and then in a hard, cold voice she read aloud the following:

"MY DEAR MADAME VYSE.—An anonymous note is certainly an unpleasant communication to receive, but in some cases the end justifies the means. You have employed this day, as I understand, a young woman—or girl rather—of very beautiful personal appearance, and it is of her I wish to write you warningly. You have a profitable business, patronised by the *élite* of the great metropolis, therefore I should say that it behoves you to know well who you have in your employ. You owe it to your patrons and to the other young women in your establishment to look well into the characters of those you place in positions of trust and respect. The girl, Vesta South, passed half of the night of June 27th in a cell in the ——— police office. She cannot deny this. I need say no more—a word to the wise is sufficient. I add in consolation I am one of your patrons, but I decline to be brought in contact, even in a business way, with a young woman over whose fair name there hovers so black a cloud."

"A LOVER OF HONOUR."

Vesta had turned pale as she would ever be in death as she listened. Her breath came in short, quick gasps, and it seemed to her that she was dying.

Madame Vyse turned slowly and looked at her.

"You have heard the note," she said. "Now the question is. Can you deny this charge brought against you?"

"How can I when it is perfectly true, madame?" wailed the unhappy girl, wretchedly. "But, oh! believe me, it was brought about by the most cruel mistakes."

"I do not care to listen to the whys or wherefores of the case. You admit the charge, therefore there is no reason to argue the question. I must tell you that this knowledge forces me to a very unpleasant duty, Miss South, and that is to dispense with your services at once. You have been with us the better part of a day, I will settle with you for that length of time."

And as she spoke she handed out a new half-crown to Vesta. The girl drew back.

"I—I would rather die than touch one penny of your money after the terrible accusation that has been brought against me, and which you believe. It would burn my fingers."

"If you stand in need of it, it would at least pay your tram fare."

Those words brought Vesta to a sense how badly she really needed the money, but she would not take it.

She turned and, like a wounded bird, fluttered out of madame's presence and out into the sunlit streets.

The first person she saw walking very leisurely past was James Bruce.

"Why, Vesta!—Miss South!" he cried, in apparent surprise. "Is this really you?"

"Yes," murmured the girl, in a choking voice, "it is I; and oh! I am so very wretched."

"What is the cause of it?" he asked, in a feigned astonishment, as he looked at her.

Vesta's lips began to quiver.

"Battling with the world is harder than I ever dreamed of," she faltered, in broken gasps.

"It is your own fault, my dear Miss South," he responded. "You know the road to wealth, to every luxury that money can buy, and my adoring love to crown it all."

"You mean all that would be mine if I married you?" she asked, very slowly.

"Yes," he responded.

"Then I have only to say that which I have told you so often before: I will never marry you!"

"Am I repulsive to you?" he asked, quickly, and in a very harsh voice.

"No—not that; but—"

"Do you love anyone else?" he asked in the next breath.

"I will not deceive you, Mr. Bruce. I do love somebody else," she faltered, "but fate separated us."

Her answer angered him so horribly that it frightened her. He lost all control of his temper at once.

"You shall marry me even if there were a hundred lovers in the field! I would win you, or slay you before their very eyes!" he cried fiercely. "If you cannot be coaxed into my arms, you shall be driven into them!"

As he spoke a sudden conviction came to her—James Bruce and no one else was the writer of the three-cornered notes which confronted her at every turn.

She accused him of it straightway, and the accusation was so sudden it quite took him by surprise, and threw him off his guard.

"You see how effective they have been in the past," he cried; "and they will meet you and face you wherever you turn," he cried, exultantly. "I warned you once that no power on earth would cause me to give up the thought of winning you. I think I have made that fact patent to you by this time."

"I would kill myself by my own hand rather than wed you!" she cried.

"You are brought to bay; but you are not conquered yet," returned Bruce. "But that is only a question of time."

Vesta passed him by as haughtily as a young queen might have done, leaving him standing there staring after her.

"It seems almost as easy to move a mountain as to bring that girl to my feet," he muttered.

He hastily summoned a coupe.

"Do you see that young woman in the grey dress walking ahead there?" he asked, quickly.

The cabman looked in the direction indicated, and nodded.

"I want you to keep her in sight," he said, jumping into the vehicle.

That was certainly a most easy matter to accomplish, for the young girl's feet travelled pitifully slow—too slow, in fact, for even the walking gait of the cabman's horse.

As Vesta walked along she was turning over in her own mind where she should go.

She could not return to Mrs. West's, for Madame Vyse's note would arrive there before her, and that most hospitable door would not be open to her. Ah! where should she go?

"Oh, it was pitiful!

Near a whole city full,

Home she had none!"

She wondered vaguely if any other young girls in the whole world had ever found themselves in such a predicament, and what they had done; and in this, her darkest hour, her thoughts reverted to Ralph Stoddard, whom she believed to be Miss Graham's lover.

His words rang in her ears.

"If you are ever in trouble send for me, and I will come to you, even though I should be at the other end of the world."

Her lips trembled, and her eyes filled with tears.

"His friendship would be as flickle as his love," she told herself. "It was well enough to woo the supposed heiress to half a million of money, but would he even deign to notice the girl whom fate had decreed should toil for her daily bread?"

Vesta thought not, and so banished the wild impulse to send to him to the address he had given her, and which he said would be sure to reach him, no matter where he was.

Had she followed that impulse, ah! reader, what a different story we should have to chronicle!

Too often our feet strike into paths that Heaven never intended, and in following it we call it fate.

Where should she go? Where should she turn her steps? Straight ahead of her she saw the green, cool, shady park, and turned her steps mechanically towards it.

A few steps, and then the sunshine seemed to suddenly die out from the blue sky overhead, and plunge the world into darkness; there seemed to be a great rush of blood to her heart and brain; then the oppressive gloom closed in closely about her.

She put out her hand gropingly, and then, swayed to and fro for an instant, and her feet would no longer support her. She sunk to the pavement face downward.

"Look there, sir!" called the driver, hurriedly, from his box. "The girl has fallen down in a swoon just as she entered the park!"

"Capital!" cried Bruce, striking his hands gleefully together. "Things couldn't have been more advantageous if I had ordered them! Stop the cab quickly, before any one has time to notice what has occurred, and bring her into the cab. I will double the price I offered you if you are so quick about it that no one sees you."

"I'll earn the money, sir, never fear!" laughed the man, as he sprang nimbly from his box.

One instant more and he was bending over the inanimate form of poor Vesta.

He raised her in his strong arms with as little difficulty as he would have experienced in handling a child, and placed her beside Bruce in the cab.

"Now drive with lightning-like speed to —!" he said, hurriedly.

CHAPTER XLII.

"Drive as you have never driven in all your life before," commanded Bruce, "if you would make that fee!"

The cabman's horse almost flew over the stones, striking at length into a narrow strip of road that led by the river's edge.

"This is the old river way," he said, drawing rein for a moment to explain; "it is the nearest way there, sir. I have been there before."

"Very well!" exclaimed Bruce; "but don't stop to talk. Get there as quickly as you can!"

Again the man touched his horse with the whip and the animal renewed his flying pace, and soon the great city was lying far behind them.

Bruce held the slight limp figure of Vesta close in his arms, looking intently down into the marble-white face.

"I vowed that I would win you for my own, and I have kept my vow, my fair Vesta!" he muttered. "You might struggle, but you would be like a helpless bird in a cage. You could not escape the net I would spread for you. You have saved me a world of difficulty by your very timely swoon and its long duration."

But when it lasted over an hour Bruce became terrified.

He poured brandy down her throat from a small flask he always carried about him, and rubbed briskly the little cold hands; but the dark eyes did not open, nor even the faintest colour creep into the white cheeks, not even when he had reached his destination.

This proved to be a gloomy stone structure, reached by a circuitous path through a labyrinth of trees. In response to his hurried tap an old woman came to the door, starting back when she saw who stood on the threshold.

"Lord! Master James!" she gasped. "Where did you drop from? You of all people in the world! Who is this young girl you have here?" and she looked suspiciously into his face with her keen black eyes.

"Do you imagine it is some one whom I have—abducted?" he asked, banteringly and nonchalantly.

"You're none too good to do it," muttered the old woman, under her breath; but aloud she answered, "Oh, of course not, Master James. Here, lay her down on this settee and

I'll run for restoratives at once." But before she returned Vesta opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she murmured, faintly, and at that instant her gaze encountered Bruce, who was standing at the opposite end of the small dark room, leaning gracefully against the mantel.

She spring to the door with a terrified cry. Oh, Heaven! How came she here, and with James Bruce? Was the terrifying thought that rushed through her brain.

He seemed to divine it, for he explained quickly.

"You swooned in the street, if you remember. I came along after you just in time to pick you up. I had you removed here. This is my home, and here you will remain until you consent to go out of these doors as my wife, if it takes for ever!"

"You have run away with me!" screamed the girl, in terror. "I command you to open those doors, and set me free at once! The whole world shall know of this infamous outrage!" she panted.

"You should have concluded your remark with the words—that is, if I am permitted to get back to the world to tell it—which I very much doubt by the present outlook, my dear Vesta," he said.

Weak as she was Vesta struggled to her feet.

"Open that door at once!" she cried. "Keep me here a moment longer at your peril!"

He still looked at her, with that provoking smile on his insolent, handsome face.

"Have you ever heard of the story of the little grey mouse that confronted a lion, demanding half of his rations?" exclaimed Bruce, with a laugh. "Well, you remind me of the little imperious grey mouse—not a graceful simile—still the story was charmingly interesting, like your own sweet self."

Vesta burst into a fit of violent weeping.

"A woman's armour of defence," he said, eyeing her calmly.

"You can not—you surely do not mean to force me to marry you, Mr. Bruce?" she cried out in agony.

"That is just it; I cannot force you to marry me, or you would have been mine long ago. Therefore, I take the only course left me to win you, and that is to force you to remain here until you consent to marry me."

"And that will be—never!" she flashed out, with a touch of the wilfulness of other days.

"Then you shall never go free," he declared, with a certain vehemence in his voice that warned her that he would keep his word. "You will remain for ever within the four walls of this house—or the grounds surrounding it. No one is searching for you," he continued. "No one would miss you though you were here half a century. Can you realise that?"

Vesta did realise the truth of those words but too well.

"I often wonder why women will be so foolish as to fly in the face of their fate," he went on musingly. "I do not like to try harsh measures with you, unless you force me to do so," he went on. "How much easier it would be to marry me at once, and not only end this bitter strife between us, but enjoy hereafter the happy life I could give you. You could go wherever your fancy willed, and I who love you so madly would be your veritable slave. You would never know a wish unfulfilled."

"And he most miserably unhappy because I was forced to endure the presence of a man who is already loathed by me beyond words to express."

"You put it very strongly," said Bruce, bitterly. "Take care, Vesta, that you do not turn my love to hatred. It would be a fatal hour for you if you did that. But you do not seem to realise this."

"It is a matter of very little moment to me," responded the girl, scornfully. "Your love or your hatred is of no consideration to

me. You have no right to detain me here against my will. Oh, I will make you suffer for this, never fear!"

The indomitable spirit she displayed was a stimulant to his mad passion for her. He came near her and attempted to take her hand. She drew back, and with the rapidity of lightning dealt him a stinging blow in the face.

She was not quite an angel. She had a temper all her own; but he liked her all the better for it. He wanted her more than he had ever wanted anything in his satiated life before, and he gloried in the knowledge that she was so completely in his power.

"Oh, if Heaven would but send me a friend!" sobbed Vesta, burying her face in her hands.

That appeal was not in vain. Heaven had sent her a true friend, although she knew it not, and that friend was Ned Blake.

(To be continued.)

A POOR BARGAIN.

—o—

THE evening after the party. What an impression of "confusion woras confounded" accompanies the words!

Mr. Hastings had eaten a half-cold breakfast, served by a sleepy maid at an uncovered table, and hurried off to his business.

The drawing-room floor was still covered with stray knots of ribbon, withered rosebuds, hairpins and slipper-rosettes; the closed dining-room door concealed the relics of the late supper, which, by a thrifty bargain driven by Mrs. Hastings, were to be "taken back" as far as practicable by the confectioner.

The glittering barley-sugar castle which decorated the centre of the table had been on its third evening. The pair of macaroon pyramids at either end were a week old, and, with their delicate tips of frosted sugar, had been much admired by M. Verinet's various customers; and the piece de resistance of candid fruit at the left would have been perfect if Jack Bright, the artist, had not been thoughtless enough to take a glistening apricot from its side for Miss Ellis's supper plate, thereby causing a collapse of the entire structure, as well as much thoughtless mirth to the young people.

"Of course," sighed Mrs. Hastings, "Verinet will charge me for the entire piece, although his people could easily build it up again. He always takes advantage of one! And no matter what you girls say, I never will ask young Bright to one of my evenings again. The officious brute! Why couldn't he have left things to the waiters? They had orders to let the fancy pieces alone. Was there nothing good enough for Bertha Ellis without ruining the fruit piece?"

Poor Mrs. Hastings! For her all the pleasures of social life were blighted by the financial difficulties associated therewith.

There were three horizontal wrinkles on her forehead, and one perpendicular line between her handsome black brows, as she sat in the breakfast-room, drinking coffee and thinking how tired she was, and how much labour would be necessary before the house could once more be restored to its accustomed order.

"Mary," she said, sharply, to the alipahod servant, "call the young ladies again. It's past eleven. This indolence can't be tolerated."

Ellis Hastings came in presently—a tall, willowy girl, with brilliant black eyes and a complexion which was rose-bright even a day after a party.

Her pink cashmere wrapper trailed on the ground behind her, and her luxuriant black hair was fastened up with a carved shell pin.

"Milly will be down presently, Aunt Sarah," said she. "What do you suppose she is doing?"

"Lying in bed, probably—keeping the whole house awaiting her pleasure," said Mrs. Hastings, pettishly.

"Wrong!" cried Ella, gaily. "She's selling her last night's bouquets to a little flower-girl for half-a-crown. The idea! and they must have cost two guineas."

"A very sensible thing, I'm sure," said Mrs. Hastings. "Half-a-crown is half-a-crown, and if you only knew the difficulty I have in getting money out of your uncle—"

"Money, money—always money!" broke out Ella, with an impatient shrug of the shoulders. "I'm tired of the very word!"

"That may be," said Mrs. Hastings; "but your uncle says there must be a stop to this sort of thing. His means won't stand it any longer, and at the end of this season you have got to get a situation as governess somewhere, and Milly must go into a store."

Ella uttered a groan of dismay.

"Does he really mean it?" said she.

"He really means it this time," nodded Mrs. Hastings, the perpendicular line emphasising itself more than ever. "And I'm sure I can't see why it is that two handsome girls like you and Milly haven't got engaged long before this. I am sure Mr. Mercer seems taken with you. Can't you manage to bring him to the proposing point?"

Ella leaned her chin on one hand and looked gravely at her aunt.

"When I was a girl in the old house by the sea," said she, "I used to read of true love and chivalry. Is there no such thing left in the world? Is it all max-convering and managing, like a game of chess, or a fox hunt? Oh, yes, I could bring Mr. Mercer to the proposing point, but I'm not sure that I want him, after he is brought. He's fat—and he's forty—and he puffs when he walzes!"

"Nonsense!" cried Mrs. Hastings. "I'll wager that you don't sell your ball bouquets, Miss Sentiment!"

"Not I," said Ella. "I've got every one of them put in water—the dear, sweet-scented things!—and I shall keep them until they fall to pieces. I'd as soon sell you, Aunt Sarah!"

"What are you talking about—the bouquets?" said Milly Hastings, sweeping in like a blonde princess on a large scale, her yellow hair making a sort of sunshade in the room, her blue eyes glittering. "Oh, I've made such a good bargain this morning! It's equal to a pair of those lovely chocolate coloured suede gloves for me. The roses were extra choice in Rex Vivian's bouquet, so I made the girl give me three-and-sixpence. Good-morning, auntie, darling; you look as if you had been boiled!"

"And," cried Ella, wrathfully, "you promised poor young Vivian to keep those flowers for ever! I heard you!"

Milly laughed.

"There are some promises made only to be broken," said she. "Oh, I know lots of girls who always sell their ball flowers! This little vender gets what is called 'second price' for them among people who are fond of flowers, but can't afford to pay florists' rates. One must economise."

Mrs. Hastings nodded approval of this sentiment. Ella looked gravely at her sister, wondering what it was that young Vivian could see in that shallow nature, that exuberance of rosy smiles and tangled yellow hair, to captivate him thus.

A ring at the door-bell was heard; a voice inquiring for Miss Hastings followed. Milly started up in a panic.

"There he is now!" she cried out. "What possesses him to call so early—before one has fairly brushed the cobwebs out of one's eyes? Tell him I'm not up yet. Go down and see him, Ella, there's a darling. Make any excuse you can."

"I shan't tell any falsehoods about it," said Ella, unwittingly.

"Tell what you please, only go!" cried Milly, giving her sister a push.

In the disorders of the sitting-room stood Mr. Vivian, with a bouquet in his hand, and to her dismay Ella Hastings recognised the

roses that he had, the day before, sent to her sister by the hand of a special messenger.

His brow was overcast; his eyes were full of sombre meaning.

"Good-morning, Miss Ella!" he said. "I am to understand that your sister is not yet visible? She has not brushed the cobwebs out of her eyes? I heard her say so. Here is the bouquet she honoured me by carrying last night. I met a little girl in the street who had it, with some others, in a basket. She said she had purchased them at second-hand. To me it seemed scarcely possible that a young lady could sell such things. I had been foolish enough to credit some assertions that she made to me last night about keeping them some little time, for the sake of the donor!"

Ella was silent; the colour that went and came on her cheek was most eloquent, however.

"It was, perhaps, a lucky thing that I chanced to meet the flower girl," went on Mr. Vivian. "Your sister scarcely took the notice of my roses that I had expected. See!"

He parted the still bright and fragrant buds, and from beneath their petals took out a small, flat box and a note.

"Or," he added, "she would have found these! I wish you a good-morning, Miss Hastings!"

And Mr. Rex Vivian departed, leaving the roses on the table.

Miss Milly Hastings was nearly frantic when she heard the story of the mute message which had never delivered itself.

"It was an engagement ring, of course," said she, "and a declaration of marriage! Oh, what have I done? I must see him and have an explanation at once!"

But Mr. Vivian resolutely avoided any such explanation. Miss Hastings' mercantile transaction had thoroughly disenchanted him.

The season ended without any visible advantage to Mr. Hastings' two handsome nieces, and the old gentleman positively declined longer to assume the expense of their maintenance.

Unwillingly enough, Milly took a situation as companion to a capricious rich lady who was going to Germany, and Ella became a teacher in a large private school.

She would have preferred the German trip herself, but Milly had a smiling, selfish way of always appropriating the cream of life and shouldering her younger sister aside—so Ella took what the brilliant blonde left, and made the best of it.

But one evening Mrs. Floyd "received her friends" with a little music a little lemonade, and a good deal of conversation—and it chanced that one of the pupils was a young cousin of Rex Vivian's.

He met Miss Hastings with a little surprise in his face.

"I thought you had left town?" said he.

"No," said Ella, feeling herself blush like a poppy. "That was Milly."

"You have tried all the evening to avoid me," said he, quietly.

"I—I thought it wouldn't be pleasant for you to meet me!" stammered the poor girl.

"On the contrary," said he, "it is exceedingly pleasant. You do not know how often I have thought of you."

"Milly will be glad to hear—"

"Not of Miss Milly—of you! Ella," he added, "there are times when a man makes serious mistakes. I made one when I fancied that I liked your sister better than I did you. Your face has haunted me of late, with its sad sweetness. May I come sometimes and see you here? I am sure Mrs. Floyd will not object."

"If—you—choose!" faltered Ella, her heart fluttering behind its blue silk bodice like a newly-caged bird.

And when Milly Hastings came back from Germany, having thrown up her position with the capricious rich lady in a fit of temper, she found her sister engaged to Rex Vivian.

"And the lovely solitary ring she wears," cried the indignant blonde, "is the very one

that was hidden in the bunch of roses that night! The very one that came so near being mine!"

Miss Hastings was right. It was the self-same diamond!

She had let her opportunity go by, and there are some opportunities that never come twice.

HER MOTHER-IN-LAW.

—O—

"I WOULDN'T have believed it of you, Grace," said Mrs. Fox, plaintively. "No, I wouldn't, not unless Ann Hyde, the dressmaker, had told me; and Ann, she never told a lie no more than Washington did."

"Why, mother, what are you talking about?" questioned Mrs. Richard Fox, untying the elder lady's bonnet-strings and relieving her of a basket, a black silk bag, a waterproof cloak, and an umbrella.

"And I've come to see if it's true," added the old lady.

"If what's true, mother?"

"That you said you wished there wasn't no such person as m—me!" faltered Mrs. Fox.

"Mother, you know I never could have said such a thing," cried out Grace.

"Well, it wasn't exactly that. But Ann Hyde, she heard you say you wished there wasn't such a thing as a mother-in-law."

"Oh!" cried Grace, with a hysterical little laugh, "I plead guilty. I did say that. But oh, mother! it was under such strong provocation, and I never meant you. How could I, when you have always—always been so good to me!"

"I knew it couldn't be true," said Mrs. Fox, seating herself in the easiest rocking-chair and nodding her cap-strings comfortably. "But how came you to make that extraordinary speech, Grace, about mother-in-law in general?"

"It was Dick," said the young wife. "He was so aggravating!"

"Richard always was aggravating," said Mrs. Fox, stirring the cup of tea that Grace had brought her. "And what was it about now? The breakfast cakes?"

"Oh, you remember about the breakfast cakes, don't you?" said Grace, with merry mischief sparkling in her eyes. "No, it wasn't the breakfast cakes this time; it was the shirts."

"The shirts!"

"Well, you know he said it was such a wasteful, extravagant proceeding to buy shirts ready made," explained Grace. "He said the linen was poor, and the work regular slop-shop style, and he declared you always used to make his shirts at home, every stitch, before he was married."

"So I did," acknowledged Mrs. Fox, with a groan. "But that was in the olden times, before you could buy such a good article as they have now."

"Yes, but Dick don't make any allowance for difference in times and customs," sighed Grace. "He wanted home-made shirts, and home-made shirts he would have!"

"An you made 'em?"

"Yes, I made them."

"You were a great goose," reflectively spoke Mrs. Fox.

"And—and Dick swore dreadfully the first one he put on!"

"I don't in the least doubt it."

"And he said they set like meal bags, and that they twisted his neck around as if he had just been hanged, and grasped him on the shoulders like a policeman! Oh, I can't tell you what he didn't say!"

"Bless me!" said Mrs. Fox.

"He told me his mother's shirts set like a glove, and fitted him perfectly—and why couldn't I turn out a shirt like those? And it was then, mother dear" (suddenly flinging her arms around the old lady's plump, comfortable neck), "that I lost my head, and told him I

wished there wasn't such a thing as a mother-in-law in the world! And Ann Hyde sat in the sewing-room, altering my dolman, and I suppose she must have heard me."

"Don't mind it, my dear," said Mrs. Fox. "No, I won't," protested Grace. "But, oh, those shirts! I have been ripping them apart and sewing them together again, and rounding off a gusset here and taking in a plait there, until I've got so that I dream of 'em at night; and the more I try 'em on, the worse they fit, and the more unreasonable Tom becomes. My mother never made such work of it as this!" says he.

"Richard forgets," observed Mrs. Fox, serenely.

"And I am sure if things go on like this," added Grace, pushing her short brown curls off her forehead, "it'll end in a separation on account of 'incompatibility of temper.'"

"No, it won't dear," said the mother-in-law. "Here, get me the pattern and some shirting, and a pair of scissors."

"What are you going to do, mother?" eagerly questioned Grace.

"I'm going to make Dick a shirt. But don't you tell him, Grace. We'll see whether it's Dick or the pattern that has altered."

Once more the mischievous light came into Grace's bright blue eyes.

"I wish all the world was mothers-in-law," she cried, gleefully. "Why—why didn't I think of this before?"

"One can't think of everything, child," said Mrs. Fox, consolingly.

Richard Fox welcomed his mother cordially when he came home from business.

"I'm so glad you've come," said he. "We can have some of the nice old-fashioned dishes now. Grace don't seem to get the hang of them, although she has always had your book of recipes to guide her."

"Grace is a great deal better cook than ever I pretended to be," said Mrs. Fox. "They have patent egg-beaters and cream-whippers and raisin-seeders and all that sort of thing now that they didn't have in my day. I never tasted nicer bread than Grace makes, and these turnovers are just delicious!"

"You're just saying that to encourage her," said Mr. Fox, with an incredulous smile. "Things will run smooth now you've come; that's one comfort."

"Oh, I shouldn't think of interfering in Grace's kitchen," said the old lady.

"Please do, mother," coaxed the wife, not without a certain quiver in her lip. "Do let Dick have a reminiscence of the old days while you are here."

"Well, just as you children say," conceded the mother-in-law, good-humouredly.

She remained a week at her son's house, during which period of time Dick was all exultant complacency.

"This," said he, "is something like living. I feel myself a boy again when I taste these apple fritters."

"They're not bad," said Grace, who had made them with her own skilful hands. And she helped herself to a little of the sauce.

"And why don't you learn my mother's knack of making such pie-crust as this?" demanded Dick. "There is no dyspepsia here!"

"I'm glad your pleased," said Grace, with a guilty glance at her mother-in-law.

"Oh, by the way, Dick, the last of the set of shirts is finished now. Will you put it on to-morrow?"

"I suppose so," ungraciously uttered Dick. "Will set like fury, I daresay, like the rest of them!"

"You might at least give it a trial."

"Didn't I say I would?" still more ungraciously. "Those shirts will be the death of me yet," he added turning to his mother with a groan, while Grace sat steadily observing the pattern of the table-cloth.

The breakfast was smoking on the table next morning when Mr. Fox came into the room, twisting himself as if he were practis-

ing to be a human corkscrew. Mrs. Fox glanced timidly up at him.

"Don't it fit, Dick?" she questioned.

"Fit! Just look at it, will you?" he retorted. "Fit! Hangs like a window-curtain around my neck—pinches my wrists like a pair of handcuffs! I feel as if I were in a strait-jacket"—withering impatiently to and fro. "Oh, I might have known it beforehand—you haven't an idea what the word fit means. I wish, mother, you could teach this wife of mine how to make a decent shirt!"

"Richard," said Mrs. Fox, solemnly, transfixing him with glistening spheres of her spectacle glasses, "you're not very polite. I made that shirt."

"You, mother!"

"Yes, I myself. Just as I used to make shirts for you in the olden time that you're always sighing after. I've been working at it ever since I've been in the house. Throw away the pattern, Grace, and don't waste any more time trying to make your husband's shirts," she added.

"It's an economy of time and temper, as well as of money, to buy them ready made. It's Dick that's in fault, not the work. And as for the cooking you've been praising up so eloquently all the time I've been here, I haven't touched a pot or a pan. It's all her—your wife's work. So much for imagination. Oh, you needn't hang your head so sheepishly—you're neither better nor worse than other men," went on Mrs. Fox. "And I never saw the man yet that didn't need to hear a wholesome truth now and then. You've got the best and sweetest little wife in the world."

"Mother," pleaded Grace trying to put her hand over the old lady's mouth, but Mrs. Fox resolutely persisted.

"And it's my advice to you to try and treat her as she deserves."

"I—I don't know but that I have been rather cranky of late," said Dick, self-consciously, "now that I come to think of it."

"Cranky! I should think so," said the old lady. "I'm sure I don't know what the world's coming to. Here's little Rick, toddling around with his wooden cart. The first you know, he'll be telling his wife about the wonderful successes his mother used to make in this, that, and the other thing. We've all got to come to it."

"And Rick 'll be right," said Dick, who, after all, had a magnanimous streak through him. "What a crab I've been all this time. Hang the home-made-shirts! I'll buy 'em out of the shop next time! Kiss me, Grace—and you, too mother! And be sure you let me have a dish of those scalloped oysters when I come home to dinner—the oysters Grace cooked."

He sat his breakfast and departed. And when he was gone, young Mrs. Fox looked with shining eyes at old Mrs. Fox.

"Oh, what a nice thing it is to have a mother-in-law!" said she, fervently.

THERE are a great many people who cannot tell the difference between "Turkey cups" and common reef sponges, and they are astounded at the difference in price. They are asked eight dollars for what they think they can get just as good for twenty-five cents. There are sponges from Florida called sheep's wool, which, in the opinion of many buyers are as good, although much cheaper, for all practical purposes as the silk ones. They are used mainly for washing carriages, although they make a good bathing sponge. Reef sponges come from Cuba and Nassau. Turkey cups from around the islands of the Archipelago. Sheep's wool and reef sponges come in ten, twenty, and forty pound bales, and the finest of the former, known as Rook Island goods, sell wholesale at from two dollars to three dollars per pound. The Turkey cups are sorted at London and Paris into three qualities and sent to us in bags. These are sold by the piece.

THE MYSTERY OF LONE HALL.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LADY BOUNTIFUL!

I REALLY don't think I can bear this sort of thing much longer. Would anyone like to stay in a house, when you were at daggers drawn with the master of it? I don't believe Aunt Euphemia suspects anything, but the natural gloom of the place is intensified to a fearful extent. Dr. Goodenough stays on, and it is evidently something more than a friendly visit, for Miss Mordaunt looked after him with a grim smile the other day and said,—

"A pretty penny that man costs Percival; and I should like to know if a butler's wife is worth it. Send her up to a hospital, I say; but he won't hear of it, and he's as hard to drive as a donkey."

Now, I could understand a man paying anything out of his own pocket to lessen the pain or, still more, save the life of an old servant's wife; but it does not seem natural that her illness should affect him so deeply as to keep him chained to the house, and make him look as if his last hope had gone. There must be something fearful in the background which none of us know anything of, and I shouldn't be a woman if I weren't dying to know what it was.

I make a new resolution every day, and that to tell him that I am going away; and every day I ignominiously break it. It seems so hard to worry him about anything else, when he evidently has already as much as he can bear; and yet, if I have a rag of dignity left it must be said, and that before long.

I screwed up my courage this morning, and tapped at the library door, feeling just as comfortable as when I last went to a dentist to have a tooth out. There was no answer, and, as the door was ajar, I pushed it open, thinking he was not there. But he was! Sitting at the writing-table, with his head bowed down on his arms in the attitude of a man crushed by grief or shame. I felt as if I must rush up to him, and tell him how I felt for him with my whole heart and soul. A wife, a child, a much-loved friend, might have done it, but nothing gave me the right to intrude on his private sorrows. I was nothing but a hired dependant, and the valued spark of friendship, which had once brightened the position, had flickered away, and left me in the cold. Holding my breath I crept out into the hall, realising, with bitter intensity, the gulf that there was between us. Would nothing bridge it, neither remorse nor passionate devotion?

Later in the day Effie came to me with quite an important look upon her young face.

"Papa's compliments, and he would be very much obliged to you if you wouldn't mind going round to the cottages, and finding out what the people most want for Christmas. He will give them anything. The clothes are to come from King's in Winchester, the meat from Harrowby's, the coals from Benson's." "Papa's compliments!" How cold it sounded. Just as if we had been introduced to each other only the day before.

"I may come with you, if you don't mind," smiling sweetly. "He said he wouldn't have thoughts of troubling you if there had been anybody else to do it. You see, I've been so useless all my life that he treats me like a child; but next year I shall be able to help you better."

"Next year, Effie, you'll do it by yourself."

"No, no," shaking her yellow head. "I can never do anything without you. Only I'm going to watch you with all my eyes, and then I can help you when we have to do it again."

"You talk as if I were a fixture at Lone Hall."

"And so you are," opening her large, serious eyes. "I don't know how we got on at all

till you came. Aunt Euphemia had nobody but Anne to pick up her sentences, and she did it so badly that she made Auntie cross for the rest of the day. Papa had no one to talk to, for I was no good. I never was clever, and I never could understand politics; but I like to hear you and him talking together, and I am sure he enjoys it."

"But I didn't come here either for your aunt's knitting or your father's conversation," I said, with a slight smile.

"You came for me," putting her arm round my neck, "and papa says you have made me a different person."

"He would have owed me a grudge if I had. Oh! child," my heart swelling with envy, "my own dear father scarcely loves me as much as your loves you."

"No, I know it," in a low voice. "A little while ago I was jealous, because I thought he was beginning to like you best; but I'm not now (she little knew what a stab she gave me). He is the best, the dearest father alive, and sometimes I almost hate Mrs. Jervis for giving him so much trouble."

"Was it always the same?"

"Yes, always. She was worse before you came, and papa was always being called away from dinner; but he never complained. I am sure no martyr ever had more patience than he, for I think it would be easier to bear being killed than to be worried every day, and have no peace."

"I agree with you. It is easier to suffer and be strong under one great misfortune, than with the constant pricks and scratches of a daily annoyance. Now let us go out, and act the part of Ladies Bountiful at your father's expense. By-the-by," as the thought occurred to me that the most important detail had been left out of my instructions, "how much money am I to spend?"

"Papa said he left that to you. He had the utmost faith in your discretion, and whatever you wanted you should have."

"Colonel Mordaunt's chief fault does not seem to be stinginess!"

"But then you see he has no fault at all," she answered, with filial faith, in which I am inclined to agree.

Armed with a note-book and a pencil, and clothed in ulsters and thick boots, for the weather was doubtful, and the mud an established fact, we started off.

There is something so ineffably cheering in carrying the promise of warmth to the cold and food to the hungry, that I felt in better spirits than I had been for a long while, and we laughed quite foolishly over our difficulties with the mud.

I told Effie she was destroying her father's property, for she seemed to be carrying half of it away on the soles of her boots.

She said it was better than being buried alive, as I should be if I stuck any longer in the middle of what seemed to be an innocent piece of grass, but which proved to be an artificial marsh, and inwardly I agreed with her. With a frantic plunge I got to terra firma, and we hurried on.

There was not much distress on the estate; but there was a bit of land just beyond the boundaries, where a company had run up some cottages to house the families of a band of navvies whom they had brought down to construct a new line of railroad.

The line had fallen through, and there the women and children were stranded without the means of subsistence, and without the power of moving.

The men had gone away, moved off by the company to some other work, and the families were absolutely starving.

As they were not Colonel Mordaunt's tenants I knew that I had no right to promise relief from him; but I did it, trusting to his kindness of heart, and knowing that I could fall back on my own resources if he disapproved.

I took down their names, and gave them a little money from my own purse to keep them going. And as we walked home I proposed

that we should set to work at once, and make some clothes for the children.

Effie was delighted at the idea, and willing to spend every penny of her allowance on them, for their woe-begone little faces had gone to her heart as they gathered round us, rags on their backs, and nothing on their feet, pale cheeks, pinched by scantiness of food, and misery looking out of their hungry eyes.

As we came to a cottage, which I knew belonged to Robert Smith, a shepherd, I saw him standing in the open doorway, with a sullen look on his face that did not seem natural to it. We stopped, and asked him how he was.

"Dunno, and don't care," he said, gruffly. "Time I was out of it, that's all I know."

"Has anything happened?" sure that something had gone wrong.

"The misanthrope is in there, she'll tell you," with a nod of his dirty head to the room in which we found his wife, red-eyed and sulky, sitting on a chair by a miserable apology for a fire.

Robert took himself off, calling to his dog to follow; but Mrs. Smith dusted two chairs, and begged us to sit down.

At first she was moody, but when she found that we were really anxious to help her, and not asking questions from idle curiosity, she poured out the bitterness of her heart to us.

We were shocked to hear that her husband had been laid up with rheumatic fever, and we had never known it. His wife could not go out to work, or even get through any but a small amount of the needlework she took in, because she had to devote her time to nursing her husband. The neighbours would not wait for their things, so took them out of her hands and employed someone else; and with no money coming from either side they could scarcely get enough to eat, much less pay their rent.

"It was all over better when the Colonel come round himself. That Judson is a mean skindint, and grinds us down behind his master's back. And now he tells us we've got to turn out. He can't have no paupers who don't pay no rent. Add there's Bob," wiping her eyes and gulping down a sob, "only just able to get out of his bed and stand about a bit; he's to have no roof over his head, after serving the Mordaunts man and boy nigh upon twenty year."

"But he shan't be turned out!" cried Effie, her eyes shining with indignation. "Let him come up to the house and see papa."

"Ah, miss, that we durstn't do. It's as much as our place is worth—we've always been told that."

"Well, we shall tell Colonel Mordaunt if you can't," I said, getting up, for I knew it was time to move; "and I am quite sure if he is only told what has happened he will do everything that is just and right."

"Thank you, miss, kindly," dropping a courtesy. "It did seem main hard to be turned out o' house and come at Christmas."

We left her, and as we passed Brooke's cottage saw Mr. Conyers coming out of it.

Brookes was the under-keeper, so wanted no help, but I should have gone in to ask after Eliza Perry if I had been alone.

Mr. Conyers, however, made us quicken our steps in an opposite direction, for he was the last man on earth I wanted Effie to see.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?"

THE sight of Mr. Conyers filled me with uneasiness, and I could only hope that he had been kept from Eliza Perry's bedside by the fear of infection. If they met—or if he chanced to overhear her ravings—I trembled to think what would happen.

Effie was rushing off to the library to see her father when Jervis stopped her, saying that a young woman had come over from Winchester to try on her dress.

"Oh, Miss Trevor, do go instead. I can't

keep this person waiting if she wants to go back by train, and I know you'll tell papa much better than I should."

"But he mightn't like it?"

"I'll go and tell him that you want to see him," and before I could stop her she was gone.

How changed she is even during the last month! A little while ago she would have stood helplessly in the Hall, and waited for me to decide for her. Is it love that has done it, or simply the prosaic forces of example?

"Papa will come to you in the school room in ten minutes' time," Effie announced, and I received the message quietly, though it sent a thrill through my heart. I went up with her, and saw the body of her dress tried on, commented on the fit, suggested a small alteration here and there, and, without waiting to see these carried out, hurried to the school-room.

I felt horribly nervous as I heard his step in the passage, but I looked composed, that is one comfort, by the time he came in.

He shut the door behind him, and then came and placed himself on the hearth-rug, leaning against the mantelshelf, with his face turned towards me. He looked handsome as ever, but worn, and almost haggard.

It was the first time that he had been alone together since that miserable night, and I know it was in his thoughts as he looked above me, or beyond me—anywhere but in my face.

"Effie says you have something to say to me?"

"Yes," the blood rushed to my cheeks at the sound of his voice. "Is it your wish that Robert Smith should be turned out of his home without a moment's notice because he can't pay his rent?"

"Who is Robert Smith?"

"Your own shepherd."

"Then why can't he pay his rent?"

"Because the poor fellow has been laid up for weeks with rheumatic fever, and his wife has lost the needlework she used to get because she fell behindhand with it, through having to nurse her husband."

"And who dared to turn them out?" his eyes lighting up and his face growing stern.

"Your bailiff, I forget his name. I told them that you had only to be told, and you would do everything that was just and right."

"Oh, you have enough trust in me for that?" with quiet scorn.

"Forgive me," I cried, involuntarily, springing from my seat, and holding out my hands in passionate entreaty.

"No," he said, coldly. "I shall never forgive it. It would be a lie to say I should. I had never done you any injury in your life, and yet you thought me capable of some extraordinary crime. If it had been Conyers I shouldn't have cared a straw. I loathe him, and am quite content to know that he is my bitterest enemy!"

"Colonel Mordaunt—you don't understand—I was half mad."

"That is no excuse. I should have trusted you once through anything."

I felt as if I could sob my heart away, for every word stabbed me; but the necessity of the case gave me control, and I drew myself up with some semblance of self-respect.

"Then I must go. I can't stay!"

"But why? Is shall make no difference to you. My opinion is not worth much, and I'll keep it to myself."

It was worth more to me at that moment than our lost fortune or anything else on earth; but I would rather have died than show it.

"But it is miserable work to go on like this."

"For me, perhaps, but not for you, and I grow accustomed to everything disagreeable," the most mournful cadence in his voice.

"But I can't," I cried, passionately, "when you treat me like dirt. I don't get accustomed to it, and I never shall. Oh! I must go, I made up my mind long ago!"

"You are not saying this in a burst of

passion? You really mean it?" looking at me fixedly.

"Yes, I mean it thoroughly. I hate my life! I hate everything!" almost beside myself with pain.

"Then not!" he said, after a short pause, sharply and shortly, as if it did not cost him an effort. "Go to-morrow! I won't be the one to stand in your way!" Then he walked quickly to the door. "Judson shall be dismissed to-morrow; the Smiths shall not be turned out. And as to the Christmases gifts, Effie and I will manage them somehow between us."

He waited for an answer, but I couldn't have spoken to save my life; and the next moment he was gone, and I was sobbing in a heap on the floor, sobbing more bitterly and despairingly than I had ever cried before in my life.

No one came near me, so I could indulge my grief, my shame, my despair, to my heart's content.

All was at an end. There was nothing left to be wished for. I should go over the water to that quiet town in Germany where my parents were vegetating, and I should be with those at Lone Hall as I had never been.

I had failed—miserably failed—and there was not a soul who would not refuse to see the fact.

I had fancied that Providence had given me a mission, and I had thrown it up. I had hoped to brighten Colonel Mordaunt's life, and I had only helped to cast a shadow on it. In fact, I had played into the hands of his enemies, for my sudden disappearance would cause a scandal, and gossiping tongues would weave it into a tragic romance for the benefit of the county which already held him too cheap.

Distraction thoughts passed through my brain like tongues of fire, which burnt and scorched away every ray of comfort.

The sudden loss of me would be an injury to Effie, which might throw her back into her former lassitude, and destroy every bit of good that I had done her!

Major Bagot, Mrs. Porter, Captain Reading—every one of them would suspect some unpleasantness; and Colonel Mordaunt would be the scapegoat for my folly!

It was bad enough to go when my only hopes of happiness were inextricably bound up with the fortunes of the master of Lone Hall; but it was maddening to think that I, his staunchest champion, should deal him a blow as I went!

The short December twilight had dwindled to darkness, for there was no moon to shine through the shutterless windows, and the fire only gave a sputter now and then to show that it was capable of reviving if I chose to poke it; but my bodily condition at that moment was immaterial to me, and I was unconscious of my surroundings.

It did not add to my wretchedness to be cold and cramped and tired; and certainly it did not lessen it.

There I sat on the floor, forgotten and discarded; not "wasted with misery," like the daughter of Babylon, but certainly in a fair way to become so; and the slow hours passed over my head, and no one thought of me.

The door opened, and someone came in. I supposed it was Jarvis come to shut the shutters—an unusual attention on his part, for in this peculiar household we generally perform all these small offices for ourselves, or did them left undone.

I kept quiet, hoping that he would go away, and not find out that I was there; but whoever it was made straight for the hearthrug, and his feet brushed my dress. Then I knew it was not Jarvis, but Colonel Mordaunt!

I would have given anything to be in my own room, but as escape was impossible I sat still as a mouse, holding my breath. Apparently he thought that he had left something behind him, for he was passing his hand along the mantelpiece, and as he leaned forward to stretch out his arm I crouched lower and lower.

"No, it's not there," he muttered, and, to my immense relief, turned away; but, as he turned, his foot or leg knocked against the poker, and made a resounding clang.

In the overstrung state of my nerves it startled me terribly, and before I was aware of it, I gave a cry.

"Who's there?" he said sharply.

I did not answer, hoping that he would guess who it was, and go away without disturbing me. But just as I was wondering what he was going to do he struck a match, and, to my dismay, lighted the candles on the mantelpiece. He drew a deep breath. I could hear it distinctly in the silence; but overpowered with confusion, I couldn't look at him. I seemed to be sitting in a blaze of light, and I was only conscious of a wish to hide from the surprise in his eyes. If I could have fled then and there, I would without a moment's hesitation.

"What are you doing here?"

I covered my face with my hands, and in my wretched folly began to cry.

"Get up!" and his voice softened as if he were speaking to a child. "You'll be frozen to death in this cold room."

He pulled my hands gently from my face, then drew me up till I stood before him, with eyelashes glued to my cheeks, my hands firmly clasped in his warm grasp.

"I believe I behaved like a brute to you just now, but upon my soul I didn't mean to hurt you. I've had enough to try me, but I didn't know that it had made me forget my duty to a guest. I was ashamed when you said I had treated you like dirt."

"It was my own fault," still with bent head.

"That wouldn't excuse it," sternly. "Your father trusted you to me, taking me for a gentleman. No wonder that you want to go away."

I bit my lip, in a vain effort to keep back my tears, but one rolled down my cheek, and lighted on the hands that were holding mine.

He started.

"You wouldn't give me another chance?"

My heart leapt with joy.

"Shall we begin life again, and see if we can't part better friends next time? Look in my face, for I never know what you are feeling till I see your eyes."

It seemed a superhuman effort to raise them, but I did; and what he saw in them I could only guess from the sudden light which seemed to glorify his face.

He bent his head, with a rare sweet smile, and an indescribable longing in his eyes, as he clasped my hands against his chest.

There seemed to be some great struggle going on within him, as if inclination were fighting hard with duty; and the light went from his face, the longing from his eyes, and in its place was a wild regret.

I drew my hands away, and he let them go. Then he stooped. My heart beat wildly as I felt his breath upon my forehead, but he only kissed the air.

"For Effie's sake, stay as long as you can bear it, for you've brought a blessing already to this accursed house!" he said, hurriedly, with a huskiness in the voice, that was usually so clear, and abruptly left the room.

And I sat on, unconscious of time or cold, because of the rush of joy that filled my heart to overflowing. In spite of his words that very afternoon, he had forgiven me, and I could have shouted aloud in my exceeding happiness and relief. I registered a vow that evening that as long as he wished for me I would stay; and if the whole world forsook him he should find me standing steadfast by his side, ready, ay, ready, through weal or woe. And the vow was kept!

CHAPTER XXX.

MRS. PORTER'S DANCE.

CHRISTMAS EVE! All the morning we were driving about from cottage to cottage, making

people happy, bringing smiles to careworn faces, and calling blessings to lips that were more apt to curse. Effie and I had been very busy making clothes for the navvies' children, and we were quite proud of the number we had made, considering the shortness of the time. I dare say they were rather oddly-fashioned, as I had never been accustomed to this sort of work before; but Mrs. Parker Smith gave me a pattern, and I managed as well as I could.

Poor little things! Warmth was more necessary than elegance, for one mother told me that she had nothing to wrap her youngest in but a newspaper, which she tied round him with a bit of string. This is quite true, so nobody need comfort himself by thinking I am inventing.

Dr. Goodenough departed, and seemed to take so many shadows with him that I made up my mind to have a happy Christmas, like other people. I know this sort of confidence is fatal, but there is a brighter look on Colonel Mordaunt's face, which has somehow grown to be my mental barometer, and Effie's eyes are absolutely sparkling with the anticipated pleasure of her first dance.

Her father has given her permission to go; and though Basil Conyers' warning rings in my ears, and Jarvis shakes his head at us, as if we were dancing by an open grave, I feel like a school-girl who is going to have a holiday for the first time in her life. Heaven knows it is not the thought of Major Bagot which has raised my spirits. No, it is the subtle pleasure of confidence replaced, and friendship recovered from what had seemed its death-wound.

Effie looked charming in her "spotless" white raiment, as I was going to call it; but as its chief charm consisted in the chenille spots that covered it like snowflakes, I think the term would scarcely be appropriate. She might have stood for a picture of innocence, with her guileless face, her wondering eyes, and the sweet lips smiling with hope. Her father kissed her with fervent affection amounting almost to idolatry, and then he turned to me.

"I need not wish you a pleasant evening, for you are sure to make it so to anyone you meet; but let me give you one caution—don't forget Mr. Mayhew when Major Bagot tells you that you look divine!"

"Major Bagot will not say anything to foolish," I said, as I tossed my head.

"He must to-night," in a low voice.

One half-implicated compliment from a certain pair of lips is better than a bushel from another. I am sensible that this is a platitude; but it expresses my feelings at the moment, and I jumped into the carriage with undignified haste, feeling glad that I was not absolutely hideous in Colonel Mordaunt's eyes.

He stood on the steps to see us off, with a pleasant smile, and a few obscure words; but I knew that long before we were out of sight the old expression of sadness would settle down again on his chiselled features; and my heart smote me to think that whilst we were dancing and talking nonsense, he would be sitting alone in the gloom of the library. However, it could not be cured, so I thought the best way was to put the idea out of my mind.

We meant to arrive at Woodlands long before anyone else in order to cover our unobscured condition; but one thing after another had delayed us. Dinner was late, and, to make it worse, Jarvis absolutely crawled round the table, and seemed to regard our visible impatience as an insult. In consequence of which the band was already playing "Under the Stars" when we walked into the cloak-room.

I didn't know whether to send for Mrs. Porter or not; but I concluded that it would be inhuman to call her out of her own drawing-room; and putting a bold face on it gave our names to the butler, and walked into the drawing-room with a great deal of outward



["THE MISSUS IS IN THERE; SHE'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S THE MATTER!" ROBERT SMITH SAID, AS HE WALKED OFF.]

defiance, because of a certain amount of inward shyness.

Effie followed, but how she looked I can't tell, not having eyes in the back of my head; but I could see that other people's eyes, having decided that I was not their style, passed over me, and rested with appreciation on "sweet simplicity" behind me.

A waltzer, more energetic than graceful, nearly knocked me down, and quite upset my dignity, just as Mrs. Porter, in gorgeous garments, was coming towards us with outstretched hand.

"Oh, my dear! I thought you were done for! What an odious man! So delighted to see you. Somebody is waiting for you, Miss Effie. How charming you both look! Ah! here he is. No, no, Captain Reading, I am Miss Mordaunt's chaperon. Not half a dozen at once. You must not go so fast, Miss Trevor!"

But I was already beyond her reach, and whirling round in the giddy throng with Major Bagot's arm round my waist, and his soft voice in my ear.

"Miss Trevor, may I say something?"

"Yes, or I might as well be dancing with a mute."

"May I tell you how charming your dress is?"

"Yes, because that's a compliment to my dressmaker."

"May I tell you that the *tout ensemble* makes my heart go pit-a-pat?"

"No, you must keep that for a doctor."

"Give my heart to a doctor?"

"No. Your little statement."

"The statement has gone where the heart has gone."

"If it has gone you needn't trouble yourself about it."

"But I can't go about without one."

"You should have thought of that before."

"But somebody stole it."

"I don't believe it," looking up at him mis-

chievously. "That's what you all say, when you've simply mislaid or lost it."

"It isn't lost, because I know where it is."

"That doesn't follow. I dropped a ring on the ice, and it rolled through a crack. I know where it is, but I consider it lost."

"How very odd! I dropped my heart on the ice, and somebody picked it up."

"Then you are sure to have it back," I said, quickly, intending to shut him up.

"I don't want it back," he protested.

"It's sure to come. Doesn't Miss Mordaunt look pretty to-night?" after a prolonged turn.

"Yes. Reading seems to think so. He's awfully hard hit."

"She is an heiress, and half the room will be at her feet."

"And the other half at yours, so why speak so bitterly?"

"Isn't it sad to think that her father will never know whether it is the girl herself or only her money-bags that a man really loves."

"You are the last person who ought to talk like that," bending down, with earnest remonstrance in his eyes.

What he would have said next I don't know, for Basil Conyers came up with a wrathful countenance.

"So you've insisted on bringing her?"

"You make a mistake, Mr. Conyers," looking at him resentfully over the edge of my fan.

"Her father could not have wished it."

"A father might yield to the wishes of his child."

"As if Effie ever had a decided wish in her life," with angry contempt. "It must have been your doing!"

"Think so, if you like."

"I warned you that you would be sorry for it if you did."

"And I'm not at all at present. See how she is enjoying herself, and how everyone

admires her! She is the belle of the evening."

"No. You are the belle, so they tell me; but everyone is talking of Colonel Mordaunt's daughter; and that is just what I wanted to prevent."

"The more they talk the better," I said.

"That shows how little you know about it! looking as if he could eat me."

"You would like to put her under a glass case, and let no one see her but Mr. Basil Conyers."

He flashed a glance at me that ought to have withered me.

"You women make a love-story out of anything."

"Better than imagining crimes, and fixing them on innocent people," in a whisper.

He frowned.

"Innocent! I would give my right hand to know he was!"

"And I would stake my name, my life, my hopes of Heaven, that he is!" I cried, excitedly.

He looked at me as if I were the most contemptible creature upon earth, and said, with a sardonic smile,—

"And all because he has a chiselled nose!" I was so enraged that I am almost afraid to think what answer I should have made, but at that moment there was a stir amongst the group at the door.

The butler came in, and, walking quickly across the crowded room, bent down and said something in a low voice in his mistress's ear. The colour rushed into Mrs. Porter's face, as it always did when she was very much moved, and getting up from her seat, she looked from me to Effie.

The eyes of those near her were fixed first on one and then the other. Something had happened! I stood up, trembling. Pray Heaven Colonel Mordaunt is safe! I only thought of him!

(To be continued.)



[THE DOG'S MASTER LOOKED QUICKLY UP, AND FOUND HIMSELF FACE TO FACE WITH THE OBJECT OF HIS ADORATION!]

NOVELETTE.]

HER PHOTOGRAPHER.

CHAPTER I.

"So this is how you have been amusing yourself, is it? Whatever made you take up photography, Frances?"

The speaker, a pretty, stylishly-dressed young woman, turned slightly on her seat to glance curiously at her companion.

"I don't know. Read an article on it, and thought it would be something to do. So I went to the Stereoscopic Company, bought a machine, took some lessons; and it seemed then quite easy, so I began. But it is not easy—far from it."

"Well, my dear, it may be very interesting, but it certainly cannot be recommended as a complexion improver. You look positively washed out—as white as a—"

"Say Lily," added the girl spoken to, lightly, and with a mirthless laugh. "It sounds more poetical. And, after all, who cares how I look? I am sure I don't, for one. I have been in the dark room a good deal lately, working at some views I took."

"In the dark room!" echoed Mrs. Searight. "We shall have you in a padded room soon if you carry on like this!"

Frances Tremeyer turned her great, sombre dark eyes upon her. The face, pretty as it was, lacked colour—nay, life. The eyes were gloomy and sad, the mouth proud, cold, almost bitter—an expression that did not suit the young, rounded cheeks and smooth outlines of youth.

"On, Kitty, it is not photography that will drive me there! I feel much happier since I discovered this new occupation. It gives me something to think about. And when I am shut up in my little room I don't think about

—about other things," she said, desperately. "I am not very successful so far; and Bertha, my maid, you know, cannot help but laugh at my attempts. I take her with me when I make an expedition."

"Where do you go for these expeditions?" "Oh, anywhere into the country, 'far from the madding crowd.'"

"Yourself being one of the maddest!" added Mrs. Searight.

"No, it is rather fun. Father promised to come, but he never does. I suppose Mrs. Tremeyer won't let him! We roam about, and get some lunch at any cottage we can. I take a good many views each time, and then have plenty to do between whiles developing them."

"Well, my dear, if I were you I'd give up 'developing' in that line, and take to something more lively. The few specimens you showed me were not, well, let me say, exactly lovely!"

They drove on for some little time in silence, Mrs. Searight gazing about, with her bright, animated face all aglow with life and happiness, affording a marked contrast to the gloomy still one beside her, which ought to have been so much the lovelier of the two.

"I have an idea!" suddenly announced Mrs. Searight, leaning forward in the victoria to touch the footman's back with her parasol. "John," as the man turned round, "tell Harris to drive to Pall-mall. There is a Photographic Exhibition there, Frisco, so we'll go there, and see how other amateurs succeed."

"Oh, Kate, how jolly of you to think of it!" said the girl, looking quite animated for once. "I am sure it will help me. I shall be able to pick up some hints."

"Get disgusted with it, I hope," muttered Mrs. Searight to herself. "As if she were not left a great deal too much to herself as it is, without being half-poisoned in a dark, stuffy little cupboard, breathing nothing but villainous odours from blue bottles! No wonder she

is pale and lifeless!" as she glanced at the girl on entering the gallery.

"Oh, how lovely!" Frances exclaimed, as they wandered round the pictures. "They make me despair, though!" with a huge sigh.

"I am glad to hear it!" said Mrs. Searight, unsympathetically. "Now, you go on; I've had enough, so shall avail myself of this lounge. Do not hurry, Frances, dear. Enjoy yourself, and I shall do the same."

As she sat there dreamily comfortable, a man crossed her line of vision; and something in the firm, slow step, and in the carriage of the small head attracted her.

She looked up to see what kind of face went with such a figure; but the back of the head only was visible, displaying some smooth, brown hair, cut so short that it was hardly distinguishable from the glimpse of the much-bronzed neck.

However, the figure was worthy of scrutiny, so splendidly formed was it, so erect and tall, with grand, broad shoulders, and straight outlines—a typical Englishman.

"He might be a king, he looks so masterful!" mused Mrs. Searight.

And yet his clothes were nondescript, and even shabby, the brown, strong-looking hands guiltless of covering, and the walking-stick tucked under one arm was meant for use, not ornament.

Clearly this young man was not blessed with an overflowing supply of this world's goods.

Yes! Surely she could see something yellow gleaming out from one of those much-used coat pockets. He smoked a pipe! for that was undoubtedly an amber mouthpiece!

"I wish he would turn his head," she said, as he stood there, so close she could have touched him. She was about to drop her parasol and make him look, when he turned suddenly, and her first feeling was one of disappointment.

No Adonis this if she had expected such. And yet it was a face superior to mere beauty—

a face that grew upon one, and won its way by merit of its clear, honest, masterful eyes, that looked one through and through; a firm, determined-looking chin and square jaw, that bespoke great strength of will and intensity of purpose, but which would have been strangely softened by the mouth had the drooping yellow moustache not completely hidden it.

As Mrs. Searight watched the quiet, observant countenance she saw sudden awakening dash come into the eyes, and a look of eager interest cross the face, as if his sight were attracted by some entrancing picture.

But it was no photograph at which he gazed, but a living, moving, picture that was coming slowly and absorbedly towards him; and with a start of surprise the saw it was Frances Tremeyer who had caused this sudden interest.

And no wonder! For she was looking rarely beautiful as she passed down the gallery. The afternoon sunlight was streaming in through the skylight windows on to the small slightly-upturned face, with its lustrous gloomy eyes, and faintly flushed cheeks; while the curly locks of dusky hair, streaming from under her hat's brim, were tinged to sunny gold, and fell with soft shadows on the pale, rounded temples.

Mrs. Searight hesitated for one moment only; but seeing the stranger's gaze never swerved from the girl, watching every movement of the dainty litesome figure, every inflection of the sweet face, with a wrapt look of boundless admiration, she crossed promptly over, and laying her hand on Frances's arm, brought her back from dreamland.

Of course, a pretty girl must be noticed, and any man had a perfect right to admire her to his full bent; but—oh! powerful distraction!—this one's coat was shabby, and poor admiration was not to be countenanced. Frances must be manoeuvred away before the interest became mutual.

There was no telling what fancies he might not indulge in; she was such an eccentric being, and those blue eyes were the most dangerously attractive ones that even this nervous worldly experienced little-chaperone had ever seen.

She even took another peep at them herself as she drew her companion's attention to something near the door, out of which she took good care they soon went.

Then Mrs. Searight breathed freely. Frances had not seen him, had not noticed the powerful interest she had almost awakened, and now they stood at the entrance waiting for the carriage to drive up. Down the stone-steps behind them came a firm, sharp ringing tread, and a voice said,—

"Ah, thank you!"

Both the ladies turned at the words, and saw the tall young fellow take a dog-chain from the commissionaire, who was standing in the hall holding a huge braided bull-dog in leash.

He stooped, and took the chain from the collar, slipped it into one of those unsightly coat-pockets, and passed out, calling out in a voice of wonderful depth and charm,—

"Come on, Tatters! To heel, sir!"

He raised his hat slightly as he crossed before them, and the brave blue eyes flashed full and direct for one brief second over the quiet unconscious face; and then he was gone, striding away down the street, with the dog trotting along close beside him.

Mrs. Searight insisted upon Frances going back with her, and soon they were seated in her snug drawing-room, sipping tea and chatting confidentially.

But a few minutes ago a silence had fallen upon them, to be broken at last by the girl making,—

"Katie, you ought to know. Do you believe in love?"

"Believe in love!" laughed Mrs. Searight. "What are you dreaming about now? Take my advice, and leave love alone yet awhile."

Frances did not answer at once. The dark, sad eyes were staring into the bright flames,

and the restless fingers wove themselves in and out of each other.

"I must tell you something, Kitty. It has been frightening me, and I have no one to help me. You know that old Sir Bernard Hawtrey, who is always coming to our house to see Maude Stanhope, so Mrs. Tremeyer told me?"

"Yes, Frances, and what of him? I know him, and have heard of the way she is trying to—" Mrs. Searight broke off. Perhaps it would not do to tell this girl, who knew so little of the world and its ways, and thought of everything with highbrow ideas, what young ladies of Miss Stanhope's type try to do. "Doesn't he come to see her?"

A sudden flushing flashed flooded the pale cheeks, and the lips curled scornfully, as she passionately answered,—

"No! He is deceiving her! He dared to tell me last night that he came to see me! Me, Katie! As if I had not enough to bear but he should add to my misery! I loathe him! To touch his hand again would bring me!"

"And do you not like Miss Stanhope any better?"

"Like her? Hark from the girl. 'Could anyone?' She makes me feel ashamed of my sex when she looks at me and looks that old man, and then makes fun of him behind his back. But she meant to be Lady Hawtrey, and I think she hates me, for she is always watching me with those glittering eyes of hers. I know she is treating Mrs. Tremeyer against me. Oh, with a sudden impulse of utter misery, 'why did father marry again! It is no longer 'home' to me. He is no longer any thing to me! And I would have tried so hard to make him comfortable and happy! How I used to count the weeks till my school-days should be over, and he and I would be together again. And this is the end of it all!"

The great eyes looked woful and despairing as the firelight flashed on them, but no tears came to relieve their aching wretchedness; and Mrs. Searight, knowing how the girl's sorrow was beyond the reach of word-comfort, only tenderly stroked the little hand as she thought of the cloud that had blighted this fair young life.

Her father, General Tremeyer, after remaining a widower all these years, and pouring out the love that his lost wife would have had upon her motherless child, had quite recently been caught in the toils of an enormously rich young widow while with his regiment in Calcutta, and had married her.

The news had burst like a bombshell upon his daughter, who was about to be emancipated from the schoolroom to join her father, and whose hours, waking and sleeping, had been filled with dreams of a future, to be spent alone with him. Now her place was usurped, and the love-sick General was so devoted to his idol that he had no time even to notice how terribly his child suffered from the blow.

She went home, only to find that she and her stepmother were not likely to "hit it off."

"She is much too solemn and conscientious for me," wrote the new *châtelaine* to her sister, Maude Stanhope. "Always wanting to know why such and such things are said, and so on. And I fancy she is jealous. You see she adores Ralph, and he, dear fellow, adores me, naturally."

Very soon Miss Stanhope came to stay with them, and then the girl's life grew lonelier than ever; for the visitor proved inevitable in her love of amusements, and the poor General, longing sorely for rest, was dragged about day and night in attendance upon his bride and her shade-in-law.

But the season passed, and the outcome of all the admiration the handsome Miss Stanhope had gloried in was—not one proposal of marriage!

Her object was unattained; till that was accomplished there would be little peace for anyone else.

Frances must still be kept in the background, for her rapidly-developing beauty

might prove a hindrance. And, besides, Maude had taken a dislike to the girl. She hated those clear, deep eyes that she knew read her through and through, sometimes hardly understanding the meander character.

But lately the dislike to her had grown stronger, for Miss Stanhope discovered that the man she meant to captivate, was not blind to the fact that Frances was showing promise of a beauty that would soon eclipse her own doll-like, but slightly faded perfections.

The poor girl's character was dwarfing under this isolation, and the deep, strong well of love was crunched back into the lonely heart, but only to grow stronger through this treatment, and more ready to spring forth at the slightest touch from Cupid's hand.

The entrance of a servant with the rustily-gleaming lamps broke the silence, and with a sigh Frances Tremeyer rose from her seat, saying,—

"I must go, Katie. Heaven is over, and now for purgatory."

"Don't talk like that, dear," said Mrs. Searight, kissing her, and then patting her hands on the girl's shoulder, added, "And don't think about love yet awhile. It is very repulsive to 'be in love' and all that, but there are many attendant drawbacks, and till the 'wild, mad bliss' is over the thorns often prick as sharply as the roses smell. The 'fancy free' period is, after all, the happiest of a girl's life. Cheer up, and look forward to the grand 'coming out' day when this loneliness will be for ever at an end, and you will be the belle of the season!"

"They had better take care of that girl," said the little woman to herself, as she re-entered the room, after seeing Frances off.

"She is just the sort to go in for *une grande passion*. Those eyes of hers weren't given her for nothing. She will fall madly in love one of these days, and ten to one with some worthless fellow not fit to tie her shoe-strings, or else as poor as a church mouse!" A vision of a tall figure, in a shabby coat, and a pair of wondrous blue eyes rose before her, and she frowned violently, then laughed. "I hope she will never see him again. He would make the most sceptical believe in 'love at first sight!'"

CHAPTER II.

"GRACE, I want to tell you something."

Mrs. Tremeyer looked up a little impatiently to say,—

"Well, what is it now?"

It was some few days later. Mrs. Tremeyer had been confined to her room with a cold, so her sister had had to go about without her.

"You must send Frances away."

"Send her away! Where to? Why?" Mrs. Tremeyer had been dozing, and her sister's entrance bewildered her.

"Anywhere. The farther the better will please me!" with a nasty little laugh. "But she is likely to spoil my little game, and I won't stand that."

The expression on Miss Stanhope's face might have frightened Sir Bernard Hawtrey from trying to shake that "little game" had he seen it then.

"Did you know Frances was out all yesterday?"

"Was she?" asked Mrs. Tremeyer indolently. Oh, yes; Ralph did say something about Frances and photographs."

"That is her latest blund. Very amusing, doubtless, when there is someone to help."

"Oh, my dear Maude, she only takes Birtha, and occasionally one of the footmen to carry the things."

"So you think. I happen to know differently. I saw Sir Bernard helping her out of a carriage at the Great Western yesterday. Now do you understand why she must go at once."

"I dare say he happened only just to have met her. But I suppose you have thought of a plan! You generally have one ready."

"Of course I have," said her sister, in a hard tone, and with a cruel gleam in her china-blue eyes. "Pretend you think she looks 'sleazy' and wants change of air, which will be true enough, for she looked a washed-out object at breakfast."

"Oh, come, Maudie, don't let your jealousy go so far. Frances may be pale; she generally is, very, but she could never look an object. I wish you would bring Hawtrey to the point if you mean to leave him, for I don't like to treat Frances so. Rith has spoken to me about it. And you must allow she does not encourage Sir Bernard. It is not likely so pretty a girl as she is would give a second thought to such an old man."

"Grace, don't be so plain-spoken. You want me to settle, so you must do as I tell you. Now, finish your snoots, you lazy creature, but arrange it soon. I am off with the old horror for a drive. I wish we were married, and then I should not have to take any notice of him!"

With which highly promising speech for "the old horror's" future happiness Miss Stanhope departed.

Mrs. Tremeyer watched Frances that evening, and was a trifle startled to observe how pale and sad the bright, glowing face had become, and how dark and dreary were the great luminous eyes. Perhaps a change would do her good; anyway, she would propose it.

Needless to say the girl jumped at the suggestion. Mrs. Tremeyer was relieved to find how easily all her worry was settled; and the end of the week found Frances and her maid on the way to Breitrepe, a small seaside place on the east coast, renowned for its bracing air and quietness.

General Tremeyer saw them off, promising to run down often to see her, as he settled her photographing paraphernalia in the rack over her head.

They had arrived early at the terminus, so, after choosing the carriage, went to the book-stall; and as they dawdled about, a young man, with a rather disreputable-looking bull-dog, passed by. A rapid glance at the tall, graceful figure and his steps were arrested, while a glad light filled the blue eyes. He hesitated, then drew near just in time to hear the porter saying,—

"The train is about to start, sir, for Breitrepe."

So that was her destination! Whistling to the dog he hurried out of the station, and walked quickly away in the direction of St. James's.

"Hallo! By all the powers, Will Wentworth! So here you are, unearched at last." "Dallas! you! I didn't know you were in town."

"By Jove, Wentworth, I am glad to have come across you! I thought you must have had a nasty fall of some kind, but you look radiant. Why, man, what's up? Excuse the remark, but your clothes betoken a long-deferred visit to your tailor's, and yet you look as jolly as a sandboy. Where were you going? Come along o' me, and tell me all the news. Let's go to the 'Constitutional' and have a snack," and Dallas Wyndham linked arms to march him off.

"No, thanks. I don't frequent clubs since I've given up visiting my tailor," answered the other, bitterly. "Are you sure you don't mind being seen with such an out-at-elbows chap? I hardly look the style for you."

"Wentworth! This from you!" exclaimed Mr. Wyndham. "Have you known me so long and yet not found out how little I hold by 'leather or prunella'?"

They marched on silently, but presently the tall, blue-eyed young man asked, as he glanced with a fine assumption of carelessness at his dog,—

"So you haven't heard of the fatal fall of Hampty-Dumpty, alias W. W., alias Willis Wentworth? Only another young man gone wrong, nothing unusual nowadays."

"Will, old fellow, I know nothing, and this

suspense is painful. Sit down here, and tell me what is up."

Wentworth threw himself down on the iron seat beside his friend.

"It doesn't need much telling," he said, with a gloomy look that sat strangely on the bright, open countenance. "I brought it on myself; still you, who have seen my grandfather in his rages, can make some allowance for me. He had made up his mind I was to marry Lady Julia Talbot. Now, Lady Julia may be everything that a man can desire, and she is the daughter of an earl, and heresates, unluckily for me, do border on Cheshamshire; but if a man can't choose his wife, what can he choose? All other relations are forced upon him, or else for sure I shouldn't have selected such an old fiery pepper pod for a grandfather."

"Well, I held out. He fumed, stormed, raved, and I, finding these thunderstorms only thickened the air, took myself off with Brander, Temple, and Perwood to Norway. Jolly time there, no end of piscatorial luck. If I'd only had an inkling of what was pending I might have started a fish-stall at Billingsgate. Would you have patronised me, old man?"

"Go on, Will," said his listener, shortly. He knew this was mere bravado to hide the smarting pain his friend was enduring.

"One fine morning—by Jove, such a morning for the fish, how they would have bitten! Well, altho' I'd drive ahead—came a letter from my solicitor, summoning me. As luck would have it, I had, before leaving England, backed a bill for Brander for a thousand. He was always up a spout, and now he has gone to Madras, and I've had to meet it for him. When I got to London I had a staggerer to face. The old man had stopped my allowance, every farthing, and I had only a few pounds over beside the thousand, which has gone as you know. Brander had forgotten it, I suppose."

Wyndham looked at his companion as he puffed at his cigar. The boyish transiency of the last words made a sudden choking sensation rise in his throat, and for a few minutes he dared not speak. When he did so it was almost sharply, so moved was he.

"Will, I thought you'd more sense than to play ducks and drakes with money like that. And what have you done since? You might have let me know."

Will left off tracing patterns and digging holes in the pathway, and turned to Dallas.

"I couldn't, old fellow," was all he said.

But presently he went on,—

"I found my music very useful. I got quite a lot of engagements to play the organs at churches for fellows who wanted to go away, and sometimes sang solos in the choir. I can sing, you know. I am up to a ram dudge now. You will be horrified, but a fellow must live; and till you try it you've no idea how hard it is to make money, nor how thunderingly quickly it melts. I suppose I waste a lot. I never was a good hand at saving."

"No, by Jove, you weren't! I'll agree there," broke in his listener, with an uncontrollable smile that ended in a frown. "Well, fire away! What's the latest? Crossing sweeping or organ grinding?"

"Oh! That's my Sabbath occupation," Wentworth laughed. "On week days I'm a travelling photographer, at your service."

"A what?"

"I go about taking views for firms. You know I always was a dab at that kind of thing. It's easy work, better than sitting still in an office. You see, I know nothing, and a few days showed me my level. Don't look so glum, old chap. It isn't so bad. I've funds in hand now, and the days go at double the speed when one has something to do. I must be on the move now."

"Where are you off to? Can't you come and stay with me?"

The gravel seemed suddenly to require attention, and Wentworth bent over his stick as he patted away and smoothed down the

stones, beneath a hot flush was burning on his face that his friend detected is instantly.

"Will," said Dallas, solemnly, "you are hiding something from me. You know it's no use trying to do that till you've left off that ridiculous habit of 'smoking.' You are like the young ladies whose cheeks tell tales what time their eyes are mute. Out with it."

"Dallas, I am in love!"

"Oh, ye gods and little fishes!" Wyndham laughed long and heartily, while his companion blinked his book, and then patted his patient "Tatters."

"Oh, Will, Will, you perverse boy! When you were in possession of a goodly allowance, with the prospect of some day having it increased to an overflowing extent, you would never look at a girl, bold as she of a petticoat, and turned up your fashionable nose at even the daughter of an earl."

"Pshaw! Leave her alone, man!" broke in Wentworth, bitterly, while an angry look passed across the rather worn face.

"All right, no offence," said Wyndham, lightly touching his shoulder. "Now, you haven't a son to bless yourself with, and have taken up the aristocratic profession of a parasitising nature-chaser, you as once fall in love. My dear fellow, take my advice, and—"

"Fall from the top of some high tree,
Fall from the rocks above,
Fall from your horse and break your neck,
But never fall in love."

However, 'tis a sudden fever, soon past."

"Never, Wyndham. I have seen the girl I mean to make my wife!"

"Will, are you mad?"

Something in those brave flashing blue eyes, in that firmly shut mouth and resolute chin, rather startled Dallas Wyndham, as he doubtfully asked,—

"Who is she?"

"Ah, cautious taskmaster, fear not. She is a lady as far above me as yonder crescent moon."

"Do you know her?"

"No, I saw her at the Photographic Exhibition some days back, and to-day I saw her at Victoria. She has gone down to Breitrepe with her maid. This afternoon I go to Breitrepe with my dog as a 'parasitising nature chaser,' with a malicious gleam at his astonished friend. "Then nous verrons!"

"But, my dear chap, you can't get to know her if you will sink your identity like this. Better come and stay with me till the old man comes round."

"And perhaps lose sight of her? Not I."

"But young and lovely maidens, and I presume she is both to have awakened this violent passion, don't vanish. She will always be found, and if she is anything out of the common, the shop windows will speedily lead to her detection."

"Confound you, Wyndham, I am in earnest," and Willis Wentworth sprang to his feet.

"I beg your pardon then, dear old Will," said Wyndham, seriously.

"No, I ought to beg yours," answered Will, with his ready smile. "Of course, it sounds to you like the ravings of a levelled idiot; but I am desperately in earnest. She is my fate!"

"A case of love at first sight. Well, go in and win, old man; and whoever she may be I care not, but she will never meet a better, truer heart than yours, you dear old W. W. I." Their hands met in a long, silent grip as two pairs of eyes looked searching into each others. That look told Dallas that for weal or woe his friend had met his fate, and the true manly heart had been for ever given to an unknown ideal.

CHAPTER III.

FRANCES TREMEYER was standing at one of the drawing-room windows of a house on the

seafront at Breitreppé, looking as if she had already had enough of it. The cold, listless expression, grown habitual to her face in the loveless, lonely home was accentuated now to positive crossness, for she guessed the reason of her banishment, and was prepared to hate the unwitting cause of it—Sir Bernard Hawtrey.

"Oh, Bertha, were you ever in such a dead-and-alive place!" she exclaimed, addressing her maid, who sat near sewing. "I have been here a quarter of an hour, and not a single solitary soul has gone by. Fancy sending me here for the benefit of my health! Much anyone cares about my health! It's too bad, and I should like to do something dreadful just to shock them!"

"Oh, Miss Frances, I wouldn't be for doing that," remonstrated Bertha, looking at her young mistress; "not that I think there is any chance of such a thing," she muttered under her breath.

The girl played a tune on the window-pane, scribbled hieroglyphics on the dull place her breath had made, flicked the tassels of the blind backwards and forwards, at last exclaiming,—

"Oh, someone at last! Why it is that man we are so often meeting! The one inhabitant of the place, I do believe. There goes his dog, majestically stalking along beside him. What an awful looking creature, but the man is a gentleman!"

"Much too poor, miss, for that. Why, his coat is as shabby as—well, I shouldn't like to be seen walking out alongside of it, that's all."

Francis laughed.

"Oh Bertha, clothes don't make a gentleman, and you must own his figure is splendid. Why, it's better than father's."

Bertha's sharp, though sympathetic eyes scanned the girl's face. Perhaps, after all, the something dreadful was not quite so far out of reach as might be supposed.

"Well, he has gone; blissfully smoking. I wish I could smoke," and she shook herself impatiently.

"Maybe you'd like to take some more of them photographs, Miss Frances?"

"Now, Bertha, didn't I tell you never to mention that subject to me again. After yesterday's failures, and my consequent bad temper, how could you risk another storm?"

She crossed to the mantel-piece on which were some extraordinary looking negatives. She peered through them one by one, a half, angry, half amused frown on the fair brow.

"We might find a photographer here, Miss Frances," suggested Bertha, "to give you some lessons."

"Bertha, what a brilliant idea! Let us go at once," said impulsive Frances, putting the plates down. "I'll have a regular course, and perfect myself. I hate to be beaten. Oh! I forgot, you can't come. What a pity you slipped over those stones. Never mind; anyone can go out here alone."

Bertha demurred, but as usual the young mistress overruled, and was soon walking briskly along the parade, the bright, pretty colour flushing her cheeks, and a little of the old lustrous light shining in the great dark eyes at the prospect of something to do.

She turned off the parade presently, to wander about the little irregularly built streets, seeking for a photographer's; but such was not to be found, although she did ultimately discover one that had been there. It was shut up now, and a big notice informed her that, "These premises are to be let during the winter."

Frances turned away in disgust, and slowly retraced her steps, wandering on along the parade till she was at the end. A pathway led on over the cliffs which she followed, caring little where she went. She had gone on for some distance, when suddenly a stooping figure attracted her attention. It was a man, and as he rose she saw he was adjusting a camera.

"Why, he must be a photographer. Oh, dare I speak to him?"

Her steps slackened as she puzzled over the sudden idea. But a longing for some amusement got the mastery of her better judgment. She was young and impulsive; it would be something to do, and, besides, he was only a photographer. As a man she never thought of him.

He had taken up his post on the edge of the cliff; and Frances, not wishing to pass before the camera and impede his view, was meditating slipping behind him, when the dog, seeing her loiter near, suspiciously growled.

His master looked quickly up, throwing off the enshrouding velvet cloth, and so stood face to face with the object of his adoration. He divined her intention, but refused to allow her to carry it out. He had not even focussed his picture; she could certainly cross before him.

"I wish, that is, I mean," began Frances, finding that, after all, even a photographer, be he ever so far beneath the rank of General Tremeyer's daughter, was not very easy to speak to, as he stood there, with those clear blue eyes looking into hers, and the wintry sunlight gleaming on his glossy head. But she had explained it all at last, with many a quiet little word of help from him.

"I understand," he was saying, "that you wish for lessons until you are proficient in the art?"

"Yes, please," replied she, "if you can spare the time; but perhaps you are very busy and may not care about it. You are a photographer?" she suddenly asked, looking straight up at the face that, somehow, did not seem to match the shabby clothes. That look convinced her. Whatever fortune had made him mastered not. Nature had formed him a gentleman. Just for one brief moment's space he hesitated; then came the words, slowly given,—

"Yes, I am a photographer, and very much at your service."

He stooped after speaking to pick up a fallen screw, and when he once more stood upright there was a bright crimson streak flushing his forehead.

He asked her a few questions as he proceeded with the various adjustments, and she answered at first shortly and shyly; but by degrees the girlish frankness asserted itself, and they were soon chattering freely enough. No thoughts of propriety entered her head; and he—well, he knew there was no excuse for him thus taking advantage of a girl's innocence and guilelessness, but how could he resist the temptation? Was it not the realisation of his wildest, maddest dream, to be standing here, close beside her, looking into the fathomless eyes, with that strange, sorrowful expression in their depths, watching the pretty lips and the pearly teeth, hearing the sweet voice ask question after question, and then seeing her waiting for his replies?

He did not do much work that morning. If she could have guessed how the blood was bounding through his veins at fever-heat, causing his pulses to throb like sledge hammers, she might have understood his idleness, and viewed it in another light.

"I must go now," she said, after they had made every arrangement about the lessons, which were to begin that afternoon. She and Bertha were to go to his "dark-room" to receive instructions in "developing."

"Do you know I think I have seen you before?" she suddenly observed.

"Have you?" he said, starting not a little, and flushed in a confused way.

"I don't remember you," she said, with unconscious plain-spokenness that nearly made him smile, "but I am quite sure I recollect your dog."

"Ah, Tatters!" he exclaimed, relieved. "Where do you think Tatters has had the happiness—that is," pulling himself up, "Tatters is often about. He even went to the gates of the Photographic Exhibition when—"

"Oh, yes, of course, it was there!" broke

in Frances. "I knew I had seen him before. Well good-bye, Tatters," and bowing gravely to Tatters's master she moved away.

He looked at his hand for a moment—the hand she did not touch at parting, and smiled.

"Ah well, little lady, one step is accomplished, the rest will follow. 'Faint heart, etc.' and mine is not faint. Would she despise me if she knew the deceit I am practising upon her?"

He sighed ruefully as he collected his things, and then whistled to the dog.

"Come on Tatters! Lucky Tatters! We must go to prepare for visitors this afternoon. I must be careful what I say, and bear in mind that I am a photographer. Ought I to say ma'am, I wonder?"

He laughed aloud as he strode along.—

"By, Jove! I'll let her guess soon that I am down on my luck for a bit! What a thing pride is!"

The "first of the course" was a very quiet lesson, but as Frances and her maid walked home along the parade in the gathering twilight Bertha said,—

"Miss Frances, I think he's a gentleman, and not a photographer, miss."

"Mayn't a photographer be also a gentleman, Bertha?" asked her mistress, rather sharply. The same doubt had been haunting her all the afternoon.

"Well, yes, miss, in a way like, only—well, he is poor."

"Oh, Bertha," was the impatient answer "you don't understand. Let us go and buy some muffins for tea. It is very cold; toasting them will warm us."

But no amount of muffin-toasting and reading afterwards would drive away the vision of those blue, dauntless eyes and winning smile, and at last in despair she closed her book and went to bed.

"What would Katie say if she knew my thoughts?" she speculated, as she turned on her pillow.

A tall, closely buttoned-up form, for the night was keenly cold, that had been pacing the parade before that lighted window, moved away as darkness fell upon the house, and vanished in the sea-mist hanging about.

"She is very proud, my little lonely lady! But the higher she climb the greater the reward! Hang Lady Julia, or, rather, may she soon be imprisoned in the bonds of matrimony!"

The next few days effected wonders in Frances. After all, the change was doing what she never meant it to do, and Breitreppé no longer was the "dead-and-alive place" she had in her disgust stigmatised it.

A wet morning had kept her indoors and she had been employing the time letter writing, but a weak gleam of sunshine, made her pause and exclaim,—

"Oh, Bertha! we can go out, after all! I can take my prints to the photographer. I am sure he will be pleased at the improvement. I will finish this letter speedily."

She had been spinning out a "gossip" to Mrs. Searight, begun when first she came to Breitreppé. The opening pages were full of grumbles and "blues," but the tone had changed now in the most marked manner; and the recipient, reading it later on with her morning's early cup of tea, marvelled.

"What is this about a photographer? Where was I? Oh, yes, here. 'I am not nearly so dull now, for I am hard at work at my photography again, and shall surprise you with my specimens. When I was so 'blue' I suddenly was inspired to take lessons again. The only studio the place possesses is closed; but I have come across a travelling photographer staying here. He says he is taking pictures for a firm. I do not think there is much subject-matter here, but he seems quite satisfied; and now he has my lessons. He is very poor, I can see; and I am awkwardly situated, for I do not know how to pay him; and he is so strange about the matter I dare not mention it. Will you ask at Frith's, or somewhere, what they charge for an artist to

go out lesson-giving? Oh, Katie, I wish he were not 'only a photographer,' he is so nice! He is a perfect gentleman. I am sure he has a history, for, although he has the brightest face I ever saw, sometimes a shadow rests upon it. You can see it has only lately come there, for often the merry look lingers behind it, like the sun peering through a dim cloud. And his eyes! I can't tell you what they are like, for I never saw any so beautiful! Poor fellow! Perhaps he has lost his money, and people can't help being poor. It does not make them any the worse for that, except in the eyes of stupid old mercenary creatures. Indeed, I don't think people are as nice for being rich. I know father is not what he used to be before Mrs. Tremeyer made him so wealthy."

Mrs. Searight had worked herself up into too great an excitement to finish the letter.

"I knew that girl would do something! But a photographer! Well, it might be worse; and, anyway, it serves them very well right, banishing her like that just to please that detestable creature, Miss Stanhope! I must warn the General, though, for Frances' sake, or the poor dear will be falling hopelessly in love; and then—"

But she did not see the General that day, nor for many days, so the hint was not given, and Frances was left unmolested at Breitreppe, and the happy hours of "love's awakening" sped on, each one laden with a bliss new and enchanting to the hitherto lonely, innocent maiden heart.

The letter finished, she and Bertha started off along the cliff to enjoy the gleam of sunshine, knowing not that the only sunshine she really cared for now shone out from a bronzed, merry face.

They descended the steep little street, passed under the archway that spanned it just where the road slanted to the beach, and here they paused for Frances to exchange some words with "Uncle Tom," the old oyster vendor. Then on they went, up the chalky, precipitous road out of the town, till Bertha, scanning the stormy sky, said warningly,—

"That cloud means rain, miss!"

The heavy, preading drops fell rapidly, and they turned off the road, and made quickly for the shelter of the adjacent church porch.

Strains of music reached them through the red baize door as they sat on the rent seats scattered about; and Frances observed,—

"The organist practising, no doubt. Let us go inside, Bertha. It will not be so draughty as here."

The church was empty, and, save for those low sounds, very quiet—quiet with that exquisite hush no other place ever has.

Over in the left hand corner was the organ, but only the keyboard and pedals; the pipes were overhead in the gallery.

A red curtain screen nearly hid the performer from view. Nothing was to be seen but a pair of broad shoulders and the back of a small head.

With a start of surprise the girl recognised her master—the travelling photographer!

Evidently he had not seen them, for he played on, all unconscious of his small audience; and Frances sat there in rapt enjoyment of the exquisite strains, while the rain spent its fury on the roof overhead.

But he had finished now; and as the last notes died away he turned, swung his legs over the wooden bench, and so caught sight of Frances.

With a bewitching flash she hesitatingly advanced, remarking,—

"How can I thank you for such a treat? We are sheltering from the rain, and you have turned an otherwise tedious imprisonment into a delightful time!"

She had bowed in answer to his greeting, for no handshake had as yet passed between them—merely as pupil and teacher did they meet.

"Must you stop? It still rains very fast!"

"If I can give you the slightest pleasure, Miss Tremeyer, gladly would I play all day."

His straight, glancing keen eyes scanned

her as she leaned against a tall cabinet of music, his fingers wandering in musical harmonies over the keys, then he placed before him an old German song, converting it into a piece as he went on. And over his shoulder Frances read the words,—

"Be she high and far above me,
As yonder star, yea, higher,
My love shall form the ladder,
By which I shall aspire!
Though fourfold dangers press me,
Until the death I'll fight.
But I will win and wear her,
Her love I'll make my right!"

A glow came into those beautiful eyes as he turned them on her; his secret, could she have read it, blazing in them, as he said,—

"Those were grand old times, when a man could fight until he won the prize he longed for."

"Oh, no!" said Frances, trembling beneath the ardent gaze, "not those days again! It might have been grand and exciting for the knights, but how about the maidens left behind? We hear nothing of their suspense."

"I had not, of course, looked at it from that point of view," he replied, still watching the flashing, changing face. "The achieving of their object so easily attracted me. I have something of the spirit of my forefathers, I suppose." He paused abruptly, and up to the roots of his hair surged the dark crimson token of excitement. He was forgetting his rôle. She would not credit him with ancestors. His feet scraped jarringly over the pedals as he swung himself out, saying, in a prosaic tone,—

"I think the rain must have ceased."

Frances was recalled to herself. With a strangely new sensation she walked down the aisle, out to the porch, only to find that the rain meant to imprison them for the rest of the day.

"I will fetch a cab," suggested the young man; and heedless of her remonstrances he started out, turning up his coat-collar, and pulling down his hat. In an incredibly short space of time he returned, laden with umbrellas and cloaks.

"I couldn't find a cab, but your landlady gave me these."

"Have you been all the way to Sea-View for them?" asked Frances, looking gratefully up at the glowing face.

"Oh, that was nothing!" laughing, as he helped her on with her wrap, and then turned to render like assistance to Bertha, and so winning her heart for ever.

He walked beside Frances down the steep hill to the street, holding the umbrella carefully over her, and so radiantly happy-looking that Bertha chuckled to herself and wondered what the General would say could he see.

At her door he left them, gently refusing Frances' offer of an umbrella. Perhaps this unconventional little walk had bewildered her, for as he was raising his hat to turn away she suddenly put out her hand with a frank spontaneity, and the next moment his strong brown fingers had closed round the cold, gloveless ones held out to him in a light pressure. Then she was gone, and there, on the pavement, lay her little wet glove. He picked it tenderly up and put it away in his pocket, heedless of the drenching rain pelting on him. His small room seemed all too narrow to hold him, and after his lonely dinner he started off over the hills for "a stretcher." When he returned it was night, and away over the sea flashed out the warning lights of the Badlost Sands, while every now and then through the darkness floated, like some lost wandering spirit, the strange weird radiance of the electric light from some outward-bound steamer. And in his head still rang the bold brave words,—

"My love shall form the ladder,
By which I shall aspire!"

CHAPTER IV.

ONE frosty morning, a few days later, Frances and her maid left Trobary station and took the road that led to the city. Bertha glanced at her young mistress now and then; she seemed in such glowing spirits, and her beauty had suddenly blossomed out so marvellously.

"I think, Miss Frances, they will be delighted to see how well you look when you go home!"

A quick pain darted through her. Go home! That meant the end of her lessons, the end of all! But she only said,—

"It's the improved weather, Bertha. Blue skies are always a good tonic."

All very fine, Miss Frances! But the azure that lurked in a pair of dangerously fascinating eyes had more to do with it than nature, surely? Else why this bewitching confusion, as a tall figure suddenly appeared, and blue orbs flashed into hers, as their owner said,—

"You! In Trobary! Miss Tremeyer."

"Might I not repeat the exclamation?" retorted she, looking so exquisitely pretty as almost to daze him.

"Oh, it's a matter of common occurrence to me," he remarked coolly, hiding from her the fact that he had seen her start from Breitreppe, and had made up his mind to go too, jumping into the last carriage as the train started. "All is fair in love," he soothed his conscience with.

He saw she could not hide the pleasure this meeting was to her, and his heart beat in heavy, almost suffocating, sobs. Both felt some hitherto recognised boundary was broken down between them; the alluring sweetness of stolen waters was intoxicating them, yet neither could turn away from the delicious cup.

Frances was in raptures over the beauty of the cathedral, and gladly accepted his offered escort, listening to his voice in dreamy bliss, and yet hardly hearing the actual words he spoke.

"Now what shall we do?" she pondered, when they had seen all there was to be viewed.

Manlike he proposed lunch, and Frances submitted to his suggestion, and was soon toasting her toes before a cheerful fire while the meal was in preparation.

Bertha alone had qualms of uneasiness. Still it was not her place to interfere, and who could say "nay" to such a pleasant-spoken young gentleman, who treated her mistress like a princess, and looked so devoted to her too!

When the merry meal was over he rose, quite naturally, to seek the waiter, and then came the sharp awakening, for Miss Tremeyer handed him her purse, saying simply,—

"Will you kindly settle for me too, please?"

He bowed, but the agony of rebellion he endured was almost beyond endurance. Like a plunge into ice-cold water came the realization that she looked upon him as the merest acquaintance—perhaps hardly that.

The old, sad expression returned, and Frances, grieving to see it there, was doubly bright and friendly, striving to drive it away, and win back the happy look he generally wore for her. It was a dangerous position. Awakened interest rarely stops till it has led to friendship or to—love!

They were sauntering back after a visit to an old church, when, dashing towards them, came a dog-cart; and before Frances had time to turn away one of its occupants was springing down, and there stood Sir Bernard Hawtrey beside her.

"Miss Tremeyer, by all that's lucky!"

The colour died out of her cheeks, and once again she was the pale, haughty girl of Manchester square.

"How do you do, Sir Bernard?" she said defiantly, as he saw his gaze taking in the tall figure lingering near.

"I did not know you were staying here?" he went on, unheeding her question.

"Nor am I. You heard the plans for my

banishment discussed; so you know I am at Breitreppé."

"I wish you had allowed me to be your escort over Trotbury."

"Thank you, but a friend has kindly undertaken that irksome task."

How that "friend" started as he heard the name by which she called him.

"However, I will detain you no longer; your horses may take cold," and she put out her hand with a decided air of dismissal.

One little shaft he hazarded.

"I shall be at the General's to-night. Any message?"

"None, thank you!"

"Ah, well, he'll be delighted to hear how well and charming you look!" with such an audacious stare that the hot flush of anger dyed her cheeks, and her eyes darkened with indignation. "And I may add," with a meaning smile, "that you are well looked after—by your friends."

"Thank you!" she said, with proud disdain. "My father knows the provision he made for my well-being when he sent me to Breitreppé, so your information will be superfluous!"

With a haughty bow she turned away, and he watched her walk off beside her "friend," the tall, slight figure only reaching to the broad shoulders beside her.

But the spell was broken. The sun had set, the wind turned chilly, dusk was creeping on, and Frances said she was tired, and they would go home.

They wended their way to the station, and the young fellow saw them settled in a carriage, and, with one wistful look, was leaving them.

But, after his kindness, Frances could not let him go so.

"Will you not accompany us, Mr. Wentworth?"

She had never addressed him so before; but many things were different to-day.

Berths, tired out, fell asleep, but they chatted on; and he told her a little of his life, with its blighting disappointment.

"And you are not really a photographer? and you have deceived me!" she exclaimed, flashing her stormy eyes into his. "Why did you do it? It was hardly fair!"

"Oh, forgive me! I know I have wronged you, and I just deserve your anger; but do not cast me off altogether!"

"Will you, then, explain the reason of this deception?"

"Miss Tremeyer, I can only throw myself upon your mercy, for I cannot yet explain my reasons! Will you, can you, trust me? Some day I may be able to tell you; now it is impossible. But, oh! trust me!"

For a time silence reigned, as she realized the great question at stake. His eyes had spoken the love his lips refused to utter; and she knew, by the dull, aching agony at her heart, that, "not wisely, but too well," she returned that unspoken, unoffered affection.

Then she raised her dark, gloomy eyes to his.

"I cannot trust. I must know, or not forgive!"

"And I—I dare not tell you!"

Not another word passed between them. There is an agony too deep for surface words, and such was theirs.

At the station they parted. Just for a moment her finger-tips rested in his; then their oad drove off, and he was left staring after it, his eyes wide and strained in their misery, his face so deathly pale that every vestige of colour had left even his lips.

He strode away, but it was many hours later ere he returned to the house, cold and tired, to find it all in darkness, his fire out, and Tatters asleep in his chair.

He roused the dog, and together they crept upstairs to bed. But the morning found him still awake.

"Well, Tatters," he said, as he sat at his solitary breakfast, "you and I must be on the tramp again. She won't want to see me any

more. And I—oh, my darling, my lost darling!"

Frances was sitting over the fire next morning complaining of headache—and certainly those white cheeks and mournful eyes bore out her statement.

Suddenly the door burst open. A jovial voice cried—

"Well, Frisco, glad to see dad again?" and General Tremeyer stood before her, his rather boisterous movements betokening some nervousness as he rattled on. "Hadm't any idea it was such a hole as this! How you've managed to exist I can't think! You had better come back with me, eh?"

"Oh, yes, father, please! I can go to-day."

Anything to get away from the place now there were no longer a merry face and clear blue eyes to make it a little Eden for her.

"You don't look much the better for your sojourn. I expected a rosy damsel to greet me, not a pale lily!" Hawtrey told—

"Oh, so you have seen Sir Bernard?" she asked, coldly, and looking straight at him.

"Well, er—he—that is—yes. I saw him last night."

"And so you came down to investigate? Well, father, say all you have to say, please. I am ready."

"Well, he told me he met you in Trotbury wish a—"

"Yes, quite right, with a friend."

"Oh, a man, he said, and you seemed rather chummy. Who was the man, Francis?"

"A pho—" The words died on her lips. No, he was not that! The thought of how he had treated her simplicity turned her faint and cold.

"And what were you doing alone with him in Trotbury?"

"Alone! Did Sir Bernard say that?"

"Yes, he did, and I wondered what madness you were up to!"

"And you believed I would go out alone with any man. Oh! father!"

The hot tears rushed to her eyes, overflowed, and the next moment she was sobbing it all out on her father's shoulder.

He was as indignant as his placid nature would allow, but told her to run away, and see after her things.

Just after she left the room a maid brought in a parcel.

"Please, sir, it's Miss Tremeyer's photo things."

"Ah, all right. Wait, tell the messenger there will be an answer."

He opened his daughter's writing-case, scrawled a few lines, then taking a bit of paper out of his pocket-book, slipped it in, and sealed the envelope.

"There, that will settle it. My poor little Frisco!"

Standing at the low window, with faithful Tatters beside him, Will Wentworth watched the return of his messenger. As he caught sight of the dainty-looking paper his brain reeled, but the writing was not hers. Tearing it open a crisp bit of paper flew out and fell at his feet. He stooped, picked it up, while the hot blood mounted in a scorching flush to his brow. He realized the fact that he had been paid.

General Tremeyer began to thank Mr. Wentworth for the lessons in photography he has given to his daughter, and hopes the enclosed will cover all expenses. General Tremeyer leaves Breitreppé immediately, so no acknowledgment need be made.

The crimson torrent surged back again, and now he was deadly pale, that lifeless white which tells the very heart-throbs are affected. Tatters, guessing something was wrong, stalked heavily round his master, waiting till that awful expression had softened. Then Will smoothed out the crumpled papers, put them carefully away, and patted the dog.

And that was the end of "Love's Young Dream!"

It rained heavily as the Tremeyers drove

to the station. Frances shut her eyes as they went along the parade, barely hearing her father tell her how he had found out "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and that the oysters were so delicious that he had ordered a bag to be sent up. They had not arrived when they had left, but as they sat waiting for the train to start the old man came hurrying in with heaping face and rain-soaked garments. Frances leaned out of the window to attract his attention, and so caught sight of a tall, long-coated figure stepping into a compartment at the farther end, closely followed by a huge brindled bull-dog.

She sat back, that deadly faintness creeping over her again, while her father chafed old "Uncle Tom" till they left.

"There, all is settled now," said her father, sitting back. "And I squatted it up neatly with your photographer, Frisco."

"Father, what have you done?"

The girl sat up, the colour coming and going fitfully in her cheeks, and her eyes sad and miserable.

"Well, you see, it was a ticklish thing to do, for you say he is a gentleman, and Hawtrey says he is uncommonly shabby, so I just wrote a line of thanks, and popped in a 'five.' What's up, little one?"

"My head—the train jolts so—"

The sentence remained unfinished. Frances Tremeyer had fainted.

CHAPTER V.

"WELL, Frances, so you have escaped! And how are the wedding arrangements progressing? I suppose everything at sixes and sevens!"

"Sixteens and seventeens you mean! Save me from a wedding! I never meant to marry; but if I did it should be quietness itself."

"Never marry! What nonsense! But all girls say that. I did till I met Jack, but never after. And a little bird has told me that Miss Tremeyer has been proving herself an expert at flirting."

The pretty colour stained the cheeks that were not so rounded as of yore. "Love's awakening" had left its traces.

"A flirt? No, I don't think so. Mrs. Tremeyer said I was an ancoos, and if having always partners means 'ancoos' then I was."

"And," asked Mrs. Searight, "among the 'crowds' wasn't there one chosen one?"

Directly she spoke she regretted it, for the look that swept across the girl's face, like some dimming shadow, told her Frances had not yet learnt to forget.

She did not reply to the question, only said,—

"I made a friend, Katie? Oh, such a nice man. Do you know him? A Mr. Wyndham?"

"Dallas Wyndham! Oh, very well. Poor Dallas! He has a sad story. The girl to whom he was engaged was burnt to death, and they were so fond of each other."

"Kate! How horrible!"

"Oh, awful. He nearly lost his reason, and has never been the same since. That happened eight years ago. I wonder will he fall in love again? He is a thoroughly good fellow, and worthy of any girl's love, her first and best."

"Yea, Kate, he is," said Frances, quietly; "and that is why I would not be to him anything but a friend."

"Did he ask you? And you refused! Oh, were you wise?"

A brilliant flood of colour rose to the sad face.

"I have no 'first and best' love to give him or any man. I told him so, but begged him still to be my friend, for I have not many, and he has promised to be my friend. He is good and kind; but—oh, Katie, help me—help me!"

And to Mrs. Searight's unbounded astonishment the girl suddenly fell on her knees beside her, and, burying her face, sobbed bitterly.

"Frances, don't cry so! Oh, my poor child! I did hope this gay Christmas had made you forget."

"Forget! Why, of course, I am forgetting! What is there to remember?" she exclaimed, springing up, and mopping her eyes. "But yesterday, when I was driving up Bond-street with Mrs. Tremeyer, I saw—I saw—the tears broke forth again. 'If he only had not looked so ill!'"

"But this will never do, Frisco," said Mrs. Searight. "You must not let a hopeless infatuation ruin your life. Rarely does a girl marry her first fancy."

"Oh, I shall get over it. Father tells me I must make a grand match, 'go where money is,' as he has little to give me. Wait till the season begins, and I get into the swing of it, and have no time to think, and I'll soon forget."

A bright spot burned on each cheek, her great eyes glittered hard and clear like diamonds, and she laughed—oh, what a laugh—as she ran upstairs to bathe her eyes, so as to accompany Mrs. Searight on her shopping expedition.

Frances chose to wait outside in the carriage for her friend, dreamily watching the passers-by, utterly heedless of the admiring glances the beautiful sad face attracted.

"Oh, Miss Frances, what a pleasure!" exclaimed a deep voice beside her, and Mr. Wyndham stepped into the waiting victoria.

"Well, and what news of the bride-elect? Is she in the seventh heaven?"

"Are people generally there who are going to marry? I read the other day of a girl who called it 'joining the noble army of martyrs.'"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Wyndham; "but in this case I fancy Hawtrey will enact that rôle."

"Why won't you come as guest to the church, Mr. Wyndham?"

She was sorry she had asked the question as she saw his face pale; but he only said,—

"Those shows are not in my line. But I'll come to yours, Frances," with a sudden, swift smile at her.

"Mine! I'll never tax your friendship that far! I have no thought of joining that army. It—ah!"

Every vestige of colour suddenly left her cheeks, and she hurriedly put up her muff to her face as if she felt cold.

"What is it?"

He looked over his shoulder, following her gaze, but was too late to notice a tall figure in a shabby coat vanishing down a side street.

"Oh, nothing; only a twinge of toothache—gone now. Ah! here comes Katie."

But when he left them her lips were still white, though she talked and laughed bravely enough, and he knew it was something more than "toothache" that had robbed them of their scarlet hue.

There was quite a crowd gathered outside St. Peter's Church next day to watch the grand wedding, and the people waited patiently enough in the biting wind for a glimpse of "beauty adorned."

Among them stood Dallas Wyndham, and behind him, looking over his shoulder, a tall, splendid figure, with set blue eyes and compressed white lips.

Down the aisle and out into the porch came the procession. Off drove the bride, smiling and elated, and then there was a moment's delay over the arrival of the next carriage, and Frances and her partner waited in the porch. She was speaking to her companion, the sweet mouth wreathed in smiles as she raised her head, and suddenly once more a pair of brown eyes looked straight into a pair of blue ones.

She shivered from head to foot, causing her partner to hurry her forward to the carriage, saying,—

"You are taking cold, Miss Tremeyer!"

Mr. Wyndham, marvelling at the change on her face, heard his friend behind him whisper,—

"Get me out of this, old fellow—anywhere! I can't see! Be quick, or I shall make a fool of myself!"

He gripped his arm firmly, and led him quickly away.

"I told you not to come, Will! This East wind is enough to touch up anyone, let alone a fellow not well from congestion! It was madness!"

"It's not the wind! I'm on fire, Dallas! But that was she! And I have lost her!"

"Phew!" whistled Mr. Wyndham. "Frances Tremeyer, is it, who has done for you? Poor old fellow!"

His own face was very pale now as he saw a possible temptation likely to waylay him, and for a moment he felt "done for" too; but it was conquered, and the arm holding on to Will's was strong and true to him once more.

When Dallas Wyndham returned to his rooms, which Will now shared, late that day, he found him fast asleep in the armchair, and old Tatters sitting up beside him, his head resting on his master's stretched-out knees. He had not even removed his overcoat, and as Wyndham bent over to rouse him he saw the long, dark lashes were strangely bright.

"Dear old W. W. breaking his heart over a girl! And yet they are worthy of each other! I must find some means of bringing them together, and see if I can't manage to invent a relationship between her and me, and so dower the bride. I have money, and cannot win the only thing I care for; he has none, and so cannot also win the one thing he wants. Will—hi! wake up, old chap, and come out with me somewhere for a feed. Let us hope matrimony is more digestible than the cake!"

Not a few had felt full of envy of the lovely chief bridesmaid that day, who had looked so radiant, and had all that could be desired; but perhaps they would have changed their minds if they could have seen her in her room that night. As charity covers a multitude of sins so do riches hide a world of miseries. She had flung aside her pretty gown, and was kneeling by her bed, heavy sobs shaking her from head to foot.

"I must, I will forget him!" she moaned. "Oh! how utterly I despise myself! If only he had looked happy, and as he used to do. But he didn't. He looked miserable, sad and old, and so much thinner. Oh, why was I so harsh, so cruel, so unforgiving! And now there is no help!"

Those great blue eyes, with that shadow of suffering in them that seemed to darken their clear depths for ever, haunted her all through that weary, endless night. And that was how she set about forgetting

he had employed another firm of solicitors, and they were instructed to send the will to Rankens at his death. There is not even the proverbial shilling for me. I am totally ignored. There might be no grandson at all!"

"It's a thousand pities, old boy, you couldn't have done—"

"Dallas! You say that! Marry a woman years older than myself whom I hardly knew!"

"Opportunities would have altered that objection."

"Pshaw! Just to please an old tyrant. Well, he is dead. I don't care for great possessions. I didn't want Chestermere to be joined to anything. However, that is beside the question. He forced my mother into a loveless marriage for money that broke her heart. Then I was packed off to Harrow. We met there, Dallas," with a glance that spoke volumes. "And you were staying at Chestermere when the news came of that mad outbreak at Monsoe, when my father lost every farthing of his great fortune. I bore you with these allusions; but, bear with me, old chap; it will soon be over."

He broke off and gazed listlessly out at the passing traffic and the gay throng to which he had once belonged—was it centuries ago?—but which would know him no more. And she was one of that magic circle, that upper ten thousand! Ah, well, come what might, defrauded of everything, he still had his storehouse of memories, and into that guarded fortress could no one break through and steal!

"If I could only get some downright hard work to do! I can endure this life no longer. I am afraid it must be the Queen's shilling, since he has even grudged me that much. It will be all the same a hundred years hence, and many a more deserving chap has gone under. You have done your best for me, dear old friend, but I am a failure."

Their hands met in a silent grip, for in moments of intense feeling words fail.

Then Will spoke again, this time more brightly.

"Guess where the money goes, Dallas?"

"Don't insult me by imagining I could guess the workings of a mind like *his*!—H'm, as you say, he is dead. What is it, Will? Where?" asked he, quickly, for over the other's face a slow, strange smile had crept.

"All the fortune, every cent, and Chestermere have been left to Frances Middleton Tremeyer!"

He said the name bravely, with a tender inflexion in his voice that caused Wyndham's heart to ache for him; but one hand gripped the window-ledge as if needing the support it gave.

"To her! By Jove!"

"Yes, even so. So, after all, I can give her something. She has the fortune now without the encumbrance. Fancy a pauper, for so I was all the time, falling in love! Well, I am glad, and soon I shall be content."

His voice was getting hoarser and hoarser and the last few words were but a whisper.

"Oh, Dallas, how I have lost her!"

"You love her as madly as ever, Will?"

"Love her!"

He turned away, crossed over to the mantelpiece, and buried his face in his hands, while Wyndham stood wept in anxious thought.

He could have laughed aloud at the awkwardness of the situation did not his heart ache too intensely for his friend's trouble.

That Frances Tremeyer would never touch the money did she know she was defrauding anyone of their just, if not exactly legal, rights he was certain; but she did not know, and it was a delicate matter to handle. And Will was such a "proud beggar" he would never accept anything from anyone, much less from her!

"But can this be, Will? Is there none of your mother's money left that he dare not touch?"

Will came across to the window, answering,—

CHAPTER VI.

MR. WYNDHAM came hurrying up the great stone staircase to his flat with an eager, anxious look on his calm, impassive features.

"Ah, you are back, Wentworth! I couldn't get away sooner," he said, addressing the young fellow, who was moodily staring from the window, his hat pushed back from his knitted brows, and his hands thrust deep in his coat pocket.

"Well, old fellow, you have had news, I see!"

"Yes, Dallas, bad!" was the reply, given in such a tone of lifeless despair that for a moment Wyndham could not speak. He only put both hands on the tall shoulders in mute sympathy, and waited till Will went on,—

"What a fool I've been over to hope that a man, with a temper like the devil's own, could relent! All this time wasted!"

"Another will be made?"

"Yes, made, drawn out and gleated over, doubtless, not a week after the row. When he sent word to stop my allowance no mention of this was made to Rankens, and he evidently was ashamed of the part he was enacting, for

"As far as I can make out everything went in the Monaco smash. My father was always a one-idea'd tyrant, and liked to have her ask him for money even after her marriage, and then he gave just what he liked. He grew to be a perfect miser latterly, so that there must be a good accumulation for his—god-daughter."

"It's no use meaning now, but I wish I had had more patience with the poor old fellow. He died quite alone, only his valet with him. I had one crumb of comfort. Brander has paid up that thousand, so I have something to start on. And Ranken was kindness itself, asked me if I'd care to leave England. I said 'like a shot,' so he told me of an opening he knew of in the Cape Mounted Police, and with his influence I am sure to drop in for that. Kind of him, wasn't it? Don't you approve, Dallas?" seeing a queer look on the quiet face opposite.

"Oh, Will, Will, you never will understand your worth! How about the parting? Do you expect me to approve of that?"

"Don't speak of that yet! It will come soon enough, when old W. W. will no more trouble you." He spoke lightly, because he dare not trust himself to do otherwise. "But I must go. That life will suit me, and besides, I dare not risk seeing her. If I am to get over it I must remove all chance of that."

Mr. Wyndham flung up the window as if he needed air, and was soon lost again in thought—sad, perplexing thought, the heavily knitted brows betokened. Will joined him there after a series of strides up and down the room.

"Dallas, does she know you and I are friends?"

"I told her so the day of the wedding. I don't see the way clear yet, Will; but one thing I know—she loves you!"

"She—loves—me! Oh, what have I done! I never dreamt of that! I thought the little interest I had aroused had been killed in that last interview, and that by now she would have forgotten there ever was such a scamp."

Wyndham smiled.

"Ah, Will, women are incomprehensible, and their love—thank Heaven it is so!—is as far above ours as Heaven is above earth. They don't often love wisely, or to their own advantage, or not many men would be blessed. Their love has in it something of the higher love, and the worthless ones get their share with the best. Not that that applies to you. You know my opinion of you. I know her now, and I think you are made for one another."

Again silence fell between them, broken at last by the younger man.

"I must go for a 'stretchor,' Dallas, so expect me when you see me."

"All right. Don't overdo it. Remember the C. M. P. require toughened articles," he said, as he watched him muzzling Tatters.

"Since I could not win her for myself," said the now solitary occupant of the room, "I must do my best to get her for him!"

"Dallas, do you think you could manage something for me?" asked Will, looking across the dining-table at his friend.

"What is it? I'll do my best, Will. I have been wondering why that piece of bread was being so tortured; now I am to hear!"

"I want to go with you to-night."

"Go! That's right, old fellow. Glad to hear you express a rational wish. Go and don your war-paint, and I'll smuggle you in. Mrs. Cholmondeley and I are old friends, so it's easily done."

"I suppose I am crazy," observed Will, as the hansom spun along to the scene of the ball, "but I long for another sight of her. I hung about the Park for hours yesterday, and she never came. And I have never seen her in all her beauty, except that misty peep through the carriage-window at the Drawing-room."

"Is it wise, old fellow?"

"Wise? Was I ever celebrated for wisdom? When a man is going to be buried alive, one more act of madness counts little. I have suffered all I can. I don't think I can feel any more."

"You don't want to dance, Will?" asked Wyndham, as they threaded their way through the throng.

"Oh, by Jove, no! I feel rather like Romeo entering Capulet's house, and half wish I had a mask. But they are all too busy to notice me. You go your way; I'll manage all right."

Wyndham looked at him, and could not help smiling at the idea of that tall, splendid figure and bright peculiarly winning face escaping notice.

If she sees him to-night, as he looks now, I think when next they meet there will be no more talk of the Cape.

"Ah, Miss Tremeyer, how fortunate I am to find you so soon!"

"You are very late; and I have kept two dances for you," she pouted.

"That is kind!" said he, absently. "I'll put my name down. Ah! I see you have given Searight one too," mentally deciding that then would be the time.

He sought out Mr. Searight, and a hasty *à-tête* explained matters to Jack.

"But, I say, Wyndham, suppose she faints? Girls are queer creatures, and always do something 'ram'?"

"Never fear, Frances is too proud for that. It will be a shock to her, but I'll risk that; and I'll tell Kate to watch her."

"If old Tremeyer finds out we are planning to bring her and that 'photographer fellow' together, there'll be a jolly old row!"

"I'll risk that to gain them happiness," was the brief answer.

Mr. Searight presently claimed Frances for their dance, feeling as if he were a member of a Nihilist "group," and had been "cast" to do the fatal deed.

To Miss Tremeyer's surprise, he was tired before they made the circuit of the room.

"You tired! Oh, you cannot be well!"

"It's the heat, I think. The place is like an oven. It looks cool in here."

Frances laughed as they entered the conservatory.

"Fancy us doing the sentimental in a cool retreat! Oh! what a lovely palm-tree!"

But Jack was much too nervous to admire palm-trees, or any other kind of trees.

He saw no sign of a lurking Romeo, and began to feel uneasy.

They paused by a sparkling fountain surrounded by tropical trees of luxuriant growth; and there, on the further side, with the dividing waters between them, poor, broken-hearted Will feasted his eyes upon this glimpse of his love in all the triumph of her radiant beauty.

Her gown was of purest white gleaming silk, covered here and there with filmy lace; the exquisite neck and arms seemed nearly as white as the enshrouding lace. Round her throat flashed a row of diamonds the dark, glossy coils of hair scintillated with the same sparks of fire; and yet, more beautiful than them all, were the deep, glowing "jewels of sight," her splendid eyes!

"This will make you cool, Jack! It is delicious!" she said, pulling off her long glove, and holding out her hand to catch the drops as they fell.

With a little laugh she took a step nearer; and Will, in a moment of alarm that she should see him, drew back, the leaves of a tree behind rustled, and Frances looked up.

All the colour left her cheeks, her lips, even, grew white, as, bending still more forward, with her great, dark eyes dilating, she gazed as if petrified at the figure standing there.

Poor Mr. Searight was at his wit's end.

"Bother Wyndham! A plague take all lovers! They never told me what I was to do! Good gracious! she is going to faint! I knew she would!" he thought, horrified, as he saw her trembling from head to foot, and yet seemingly unconscious of the shivers.

He touched her arm gently, saying,—
"Frances, what is it? Are you cold? I thought you would be chilled, playing with that water."

His words recalled her to herself. The shivers ceased, and she drew a long breath as he, with feigned surprise, exclaimed,—

"By Jove! was someone there? That sounded like a step!"

"Oh, no; imagination. But I have seen a ghost, and they don't tread noisily. It was not a pleasant surprise, and I hope never to have such another. Please let us go back to the warmth and light of an every-day world!"

Her eyes glittered hard and cold; her erstwhile pale cheeks were flashed into burning spots of colour, and she gave a bitter little laugh.

Not even yet had she learned to forget!

CHAPTER VII.

"But what has put this idea into your head, Frances?"

"Oh, many things, Mr. Wyndham. You know I have told you from the first that I never felt the money belonged to me. I was quite sure Mr. Middleton had some relations whom he was angry with, or something, because he never used to even hint at leaving me anything much, except some jewellery; and, then, that boy. I can't forget that boy!"

Frances and Mr. Wyndham were sitting together in Kate Searight's pretty conservatory at one of her afternoon crushes.

"Boy! What boy?"

"Haven't I told you? Oh, I thought I had. I have told father about it so often. Do you know," dropping her voice, and leaning towards him—"please don't think me wicked and suspicious, but I can't help thinking father does not believe it is all right, for he never will let me go to see the lawyers. And when I talk about this boy he gets angry, and scoffs at my imagination. Yes; now about the boy. You know I often used to go and stay with old Mr. Middleton when I was a child, and father was away, and I did not like it much, it was so dreadfully lonely—never anyone there; and I asked him couldn't he get me someone to play with, and he said, 'One at a time is enough'; so I imagined he had a family somewhere that he saw by degrees. One day, in the billiard-room cupboard, I found a lot of boy's things; and after that I used to dress a brush up with that coat and cap, and play ball with it, and call it 'Jack.' Jack became a very real play-fellow, and I used to talk to him by the hour. You see, I was desperately lonely!"

"So you think that boy is a relation?"

"Don't you think it points to that? And I always feel the money is not mine! I have begged father to try and find out who that boy is, for he may be poor, and I may be defrauding him, or, at any rate, for the sake of the happiness he unconsciously gave me in my childhood, I should like to go shares!"

"Oh, dear, generous little girl!" he said, as he put his hand lightly on her head. "So if this someone turned out to be a badly-treated heir, what would you do?"

"Do! Give it him all back, and perhaps—perhaps be happy at last! Oh, you are my friend. Will you promise now to help me?"

"Say, will you promise, Dallas?"

"Dallas!" she whispered. A sudden remembrance of when that promise had been given flashed upon her, and she put out her hand and laid it gently on his.

"Thank you, dear, for that word. I once foolishly aspired to fill a higher, nearer post than friend. Well, let that pass, it was not to be; but whoever may claim it in the future rest assured you will always have one lifelong friend to do you service."

He stooped and pressed a long kiss on the pure white brow—a kiss of renunciation, and then offering her his arm, led her back to the crowded drawing-room, leaving her close by her father's side.

"Oh, Kate, isn't it kind of Mr. Wyndham I love so having tea in his rooms, and it is such a long time since he asked us. Of course, he had that sick friend here. I daresay that prevented him. I wonder has he any special reason now? Why do you smile, Kate?"

"Oh, nothing! Most people always have reasons for sending out invitations for tea?"

"No, only he made rather a point of it."

Mr. Wyndham met them in the doorway with his usual kind, quick smile.

"Oh, how beautifully you have decorated the room with flowers!" exclaimed Frances, wandering round on a tour of inspection. "Why, what queer boots, and what a funny hat!" they suddenly heard her say, "Do they belong to you?"

Dallas rose and walked towards her, his face pale and stern, for he knew he had news to tell her to-day that would put her for ever beyond his reach.

"No, they belong to an outfit."

"An outfit! Is some one going away?" she asked, soberly.

"Yes, a friend of mine leaves shortly to join the Cape Mounted Police."

"A friend of yours! And you are sorry?" she said, looking quickly up at the still face above her. Then I am sorry too, for you. Must he go?"

"Yes, Frances; he must go, because he has lost all his money."

"Oh, how grieved I am! And I have just got over so much more than I want!"

"Well, if you will come over here and have some tea I will tell you something about him, if you care to hear."

"Of course I shall like to hear of anything that you are interested in," she said, smiling up at him.

She little knew how hard that swift sweet smile of hers had made the telling to him.

Frances took the cup of tea he offered her, and then choosing a tempting little cake, she sat down on a low chair on one side of the hearth, and leaned her head against the old oak fireplace.

"Do you remember a little chat we had together one day about your fortune?" he began.

"My fortune! How uninteresting!"

For a moment the girl looked puzzled, then suddenly—

"Oh, Dallas!" she exclaimed. "I guess! Are you going to tell me of a plan by which I can give some of it to this friend of yours? I am sure it would be far nicer than bestowing a thanksgiving tithe on our church, as Mr. Gathbert says I ought to do."

Kate Searight laughed heartily; but Mr. Wyndham only put out one hand, and lightly touched the soft, dark head.

"Little Quixote!"

"Don't call me names like father does, please," interrupted the girl.

"Don't be afraid. I have not the slightest intention of doing so, you little firework!" he said, in an amused tone. "Well, and what if I did say I thought you might certainly give some to him? My dear child, your people would never consent to such philanthropy! You are not of age, and your father might certainly and reasonably object."

"You are teasing her, Dallas. Tell her now," said Mrs. Searight, who appeared to be unusually nervous this afternoon, and who kept glancing at the clock.

"Playing about the bush never did for me. Frances, I have something to tell you," he began, very gravely, "a something that may alter your whole life, perhaps entirely change it."

Her face paled perceptibly at his low-spoken words. She set down her cup hastily, and put up one hand between her and the blaze.

"Will you tell me, please, what you mean?" she asked, in a rather breathless little voice.

"I have found out that Mr. Middleton has an heir, who has a nearer claim to the property."

"Oh! is that all?"

The relief was so great that for a moment she seemed barely able to grasp the news; and Mr. Wyndham said across to Mrs. Searight,—

"A novel way of receiving the news that one's fortune is in jeopardy."

Frances' first thought was,—

"Oh! how vexed father will be! And does this friend of yours know I have got his money?"

"My dear Frances," interrupted Mrs. Searight, "you speak as if you were a thief! It is your money fairly enough, and not many would talk so lightly of giving it up."

"My friend certainly knows it has been willed away to a certain Frances Tremeyer, Mr. Middleton's god-daughter."

"And is that why he is leaving England?"

"Yes, partly. You see he was always brought up as his grandfather's heir, for he is a grandson."

"A grandson! Then I expect he is my 'Jack!'"

Mrs. Searight smiled at the possessive adjective, it was so applicable.

"And you say I may see him?—the boy who used to go to Cheestermere when I was not there, and cut up all my dolls, or hang them on the orchard-trees? Oh! what fun!"

"Yes, you may certainly see 'your Jack!'"

He passed his fingers across his moustache and glanced comically at Mrs. Searight.

"But do be serious now, Frances. I told you this because you held my promise that I would help you to find out if there were any one who had any right to the whole or part of this money. But, remember, you need not give it up. It is a large fortune to play 'pitch-and-toss' with in this reckless fashion. Money is a good possession, and a great essential to one's comfort and happiness."

"Oh, please don't read me a sermon when I am all excitement to see 'Jack.' I have a thousand things to ask him about. Will he be here to-day?"

"I am expecting him every minute."

"Dallas," broke in Mrs. Searight, irrelevantly, "you promised me I might have a chat with Mrs. Smith on household affairs. Can I see her now?"

"Certainly. I'll conduct you to the lower regions now. I will soon be back, Frances. Meanwhile, please excuse me, and amuse yourself with a further examination of my friend's 'goods and chattels.'"

He paused at the door to glance back at her, and something in his face made Mrs. Searight say with a sigh,—

"Oh, Dallas, how I wish you—"

"Kate, wishes that are never to be fulfilled are best left unexpressed. Happy Will! I wish him success!"

The room was growing dusky now, only the fire threw gleams of brightness about. Frances went over to the couch where the "queer boots and funny hat" reposed, and took them up one by one. Doubly interesting were they now she knew it lay in her power to make them useless to their owner.

"I wonder would it suit me?" she said, as she held the helmet poised on her hand. She returned to the hearthrug, and putting it on her soft, dark masses of hair, gazed at herself in the mirror, laughing quietly at her strange reflection. "Oh! how absurd and incongruous it looks! I'd do for Joan of Arc capitally. Oh, Dallas!"

The opening door caused the confused ejaculation. To be caught openly admiring oneself is embarrassing. A tall figure was groping its way to the fireplace. It was too dark to distinguish features, but something in the build of that figure warned her it was not her host.

Then, of course, it must be "Jack," Mr. Middleton's grandson; and to hide her nervousness she plunged into speech, forgetting that probably his name was neither Jack nor Middleton.

"Oh, are you Jack, who used to go to

Cheestermere, and with whose things I have so often played? I—"

The sentence died away at its birth, for the new-comer stood just where the firelight caught the pale, set features and misery-filled eyes.

"You! I—" She could say no more.

"Miss Tremeyer!" burst from the young man, as he reeled, in his overpowering surprise, and seized the back of a tall chair for support.

Frances gave a weak, nervous laugh, and then hurriedly began to explain.

"I am here with Mrs. Searight taking tea. It has gone downstairs. I mean Mrs. Smith. No, not that. They, Kate and Dallas—oh! Mrs. Searight and Mr. Wyndham have gone to housekeep."

She broke down utterly and covered her face with her hands to hide the burning blushes that rose to the roots of her hair. A most painful silence reigned till he could endure it no longer. At any cost he must speak.

"I beg your pardon for intruding. It was most accidental. I thought the room was empty, and the guests were gone. Wyndham did not tell me who his guests were to be or, pray believe me, this would not have occurred."

The voice was icy cold, and the words quietly spoken. Frances shivered, and slowly took down her trembling fingers, and her face now was as white as his own.

"Mr. Wyndham has not been fair to either of us," she said, trying to steady her quivering lips. Then as a sudden, awful idea occurred to her she said,—

"Please do not go. I want very much to speak to you."

He paused then, for he had already taken a few lingering steps down the room. Though it was torture to meet her so, yet was it torture doubled a thousandfold not to see her at all.

"Tell me," she began in her pretty, imperious way, "is it you who are going to the Cape?"

That word recalled to her memory the foolish act in which he had surprised her. Quickly she put up her hand. Oh, what must he be thinking! His helmet still jauntily reposed upon her curly locks. She dragged it off with a bewitching air of blushing confusion, rumpling the glossy coils as she did so, but only adding to her loveliness thereby. He took it from her, murmuring,—

"I thank you. You have increased its value more than I dare tell you."

"Ah, then it is you! And you are going to be a policeman!"

He could not prevent the smile that overspread his face, and lighted up his eyes.

"Oh, do not be afraid, I shall not 'run you in!' I am not qualified for duty, so you are safe."

"Now am I sure you are Mr. Middleton's grandson and 'Jack!'" No, of course you don't understand me. I will explain. You took me greatly by surprise when you entered. I expected someone quite different, because Mr. Wyndham had been telling me about the real heir."

She paused as she caught a stifled ejaculation. So the secret was out, and Wyndham had turned traitor!

"I ought to have been told! Did you think I was satisfied to take the money, never asking one question? I have been trying to find you out, not as you," quickly flashing, "but as a probable someone turned out of their rights. And to think it should be you! Oh! I am punished! How you must despise me, laugh at me!"

She broke down, completely overcome by a burst of hysterical sobs that she vainly strove to subdue. He felt utterly at a loss. Though longing to take her in his arms, and kiss away her tears, he yet would not speak one word of comfort. Only by perfect stillness could he stem the torrent of passionate love that rushed to his rigid lips. But the veins on his forehead stood out like blue cords, and swelled into ropes on his hands and wrists.

But soon her stronger nature reasserted itself, and she sat up, pushed back the thick hair from her temples, and rubbed her eyes in a matter-of-fact way, trying to make him think she was quite at her ease again.

"You must think I am an escaped lunatic; but will you let me tell you what it means, and I will make myself—"

"Miss Tremeyer could not make herself anything but perfection."

She sprang up.

"I deserve those words, Mr. Wentworth, and harsher, crueler ones, but the sarcasm lurking beneath them adds to their sting. Be satisfied you have revenged yourself by them."

"Miss Tremeyer! I revenge myself on you! Do you think me capable of that? We—you must excuse me. I dare not stay here longer, or I shall betray myself."

Was he going to speak? Ah! had he only looked he must have seen the love shining in her eyes.

Again she detained him, and with many breakdowns and in low sweet tones told him all the childish story of her boy friend "Jack."

When she had finished he said,—

"Now will you for the sake of 'Jack,' spare me kindly thought to his unworthy representative? After to-day you will never see him again." There was a quick start on her part and her hands looked themselves together. "And I am deeply sorry for the disillusion, Wyndham should never have allowed it; but will you try to forget this interview, and think of me still as 'Jack?'"

"But there is the money! You must take the money, for it is yours!"

"Never!"

So sharply rang out the word that she looked up at him.

"I could never touch one farthing of your money. Do you remember when you last gave me money? As long as life lasts will the recollection of that moment remain with me—a punishment for my mad folly!"

"Mr. Wentworth," putting up her hand to her collar as if it stilled her, "did you think I knew of or sanctioned that?"

"You did not?"

"No," in the softest whisper.

"Oh, if I had known that all this weary time!"

"Would it have made much difference to you?"

"Difference!" And then the honours he had set himself were broken down; the might of his love overwhelmed them. Once more the bonny blue eyes shone with their old lustre and masterful power into hers, forcing from them the secret her lips could not tell. And for her love he would not ask, because it meant the money too!

"When a man tells his love, does he stop at the telling? Does he never want an answer?"

"Miss Tremeyer, forgive me, my darling, do you know what you are making me think? Oh! I dare not let myself believe it."

For reply she moved more closely to him, whispering,—

"The money and I are inseparable. I have offered you the one. Can you not understand?"

"Oh, my darling, won at last!"

"I think I have always been won. But I was very nearly lost through your blindness, Will!"

"Hallo! you two in a dark room!" suddenly sounded Dallas Wyndham's cheerful voice.

"Oh, Friar is fond of that apartment!" laughed Mrs. Searight.

"Well we have given you sufficient opportunity to develop something. Is the money question settled?"

"Oh, Dallas! we owe it all to you," said Will.

For answer he stooped and kissed the beautiful trembling lips, saying,—

"Heaven bless you both, my dear friends!"

[THE END.]

FACETIA.

Castles in the air do not bring in any rents.

"And you allowed your girl's father to kick you?" "I did. But how can a fellow help what's done behind his back?"

Mistress: "Did you break this vase?" Servant: "Deed I didn't, marm. I jess let hit drap, an' den hit broke hitself up."

"Sh!" exclaimed Tommy, listening at the door, "there's company in the parlour."

"How do you know?" inquired Willie.

"Mamma's calling papa 'my love.'"

He (reading about acrobats): "The paper says that tumbler don't last long." She (absently): "I'm sure they don't in our house. Bridget broke two to-day."

ROBINSON: "Do you know that you have the reputation among your creditors of being very polite?" Travers: "Of course, I always ask them to call again."

Mrs. Jones: "Just think of it! There is a policeman visiting our ugly old cook." Mr. Jones: "Great Scott! How hungry that poor man must be."

FIRST PEDESTRIAN: "There is scarcely any water coming from that sprinkling cart." Second Pedestrian: "The driver is probably saving it for the crossings."

Sue: "What a wonderful thing is Nature! How grand! How comprehensive!" He: "Yass; even the smallest plant or the smallest insect has got a Latin name."

AT THE RACES.—He: "What is your idea of a mean man?" She: "I think the meanest man is one who knows what horse is going to win and won't tell."

FATHER: "I'm surprised, boys, to see you swimming on Sunday. Didn't you promise you wouldn't?" Jimmy Dodd: "Yea, sir, but we ain't swimmin'; we're only bathin'."

THERE are three kinds of people in the world—the wills, the won'ts, and the can'ts. The first accomplish everything, the second oppose everything, and the third fail in everything."

"Now, if I could take a couple of weeks to sleep, and rest, and get over my trip," said the man just back from a fortnight of travel, "I should think my vacation perfect."

A LITTLE girl in a primary school, being asked to tell the difference between the words "feet" and "foot," replied: "One feet is a foot, but a whole lot of foots is a feet."

Mrs. BASHFUL: "I don't like the way your husband calls me dearest." Mrs. Jones: "Oh, you must not mind him. He even calls me that."

SERVANT: "I come to give notice that I am going to quit." Mistress: "What is there about this place that you don't like?" Servant: "Your husband."

JOHN: "Please, pa, let me have a shilling to give to a poor, lame man." Pa: "Who is the poor, lame man, Johnny?" Johnny: "Er—well, pa, he's the ticket-seller at the circus."

"Now, madam," said the enumerator, to the poet's wife, "your occupation?" "Seamstress, cook, chambermaid, waitress, housewife, an amanuensis, errand boy, laundress, and so forth."

"What a fine conversationalist Mr. Talker is, to be sure." "Well, you must remember that he has had every advantage." "Is he a college man?" "No; I believe he was a barber in his early days."

"Why, where have you been so long?" she asked, as he rejoined the party on the hotel piazza. "Oh, simply indulging in quiet reflections." "Oh, you vain man! Looking at yourself in the mirror, I suppose."

"Uncle John, do you know that a baby fed on elephants' milk gained twenty pounds in a week?" "Nonsense, Emily! Impossible! Whose baby was it?" "It was the elephant's baby," replied Emily.

"You keep all articles of the toilet, I suppose?" asked a young lady of a dress clerk. "Yea, ma'am." "Well, you may show me some of that rouge et noir that I've read so much about."

"I HAVE an aunt who is very unfortunate," said Maude. "She is slightly deaf and very near-sighted." "Gaspous!" responded Maude. "What a lovely chaperon she would make."

PROUD MOTHER: "At last, my dear, your education is finished, and you have diplomas from the highest seats of learning in the world." Cultured Daughter (wearily): "Yea, and now I'm too old to marry."

MUSICAL HOSTESS: "Would you like a gavotte now, Mr. Wildwest?" Mr. Wildwest: "Thank you, no; I don't care much for those foreign dishes. A plain ham sandwich is good enough for me."

Mrs. LUSHLEY: "And there you were, when the policeman found you at three in the morning, hugging a cigar sign. Oh, it's awful!" Mr. Lushley: "My dear, it surely is not possible that you are jealous of a cigar sign."

FIRST MISS: "What a handsome moustache that gentleman has!" Second Miss: "Yea; but it must be very disagreeable to have a moustache on your lip." First Miss: "It isn't, though." Second Miss: "How do you know?"

SOMEONE calls for a combination fan that can be used one day to cool one's fevered brow, and the next to shovel off the snow. All right so far as it goes; but it would be more perfect if it could also be used as an umbrella in rainy weather.

DAUGHTER: "Mamma, if Mr. De Williams, that rich old banker, asks me to marry him, what shall I answer?" Mamma (indignantly): "Well, that's a pretty question to ask me, isn't it? I thought you had common-sense, at least."

"SAY, Pat, whatever made you go to work for old Uncle Dan? He's the meanest man in the country." "Mame, is it?" said Pat: "why, shure, an' he's the finest, nighest goin' master ever I had, bedad. He gives a man fifteen hours to do a day's work in."

"You made an awfully pretty picture in the moonlight last night with Jack. I saw you from my window." "Heavens; did they all see me?" "I think they did, from the remarks at breakfast. But I did all I could to shield you, my dear. I acknowledged that it was I."

"WHAT, sir? You arrived here this morning by the early train, and half-an-hour later you were arrested for stealing! This is frightful!" said the magistrate. "Frightful! I should just think it is frightful!" said the prisoner, coolly. "Why, I hadn't time to look round the town."

A: "I hear that your daughter was married to a man in Japan." B: "Yea, that's so." A: "Is he well off?" B: "Not very." A: "And what is his name?" B: "Smith."

A: "Great Scott! The idea of a woman going all the way to Japan to marry a poor man by the name of Smith."

Mrs. BAGGS (married five years): "Why, Mrs. Suggs, what in the world are you sobbing so about? Has anything gone wrong?" Mrs. Suggs (married eight years): "Oh, Mrs. Baggs (sob), I can't help it (sob), but my heart is almost broken (sob). My husband kissed me so affectionately when he went away this morning (sob) that I can't help being afraid he is going to do something wrong."

DEAF AND DUMB.—Deaf and Dumb Beggar (at unexpectedly receiving a penny): "Oh, thankee, thankee." Benevolent Passer: "Eh? What does this mean, sir? You can talk!" Beggar (in confusion): "Y-e-s, sir. Y-ess, sir, I'm only holdin' this corner for th' poor deaf and dumb man wot belongs here." Benevolent Passer (quickly): "Where is he?" Beggar (in worse confusion): "He's—he's gone to th' park t' hear th' music."

SOCIETY.

THE Prince of Wales is the thirty-third great-grandson of King Alfred.

THE Cesarewitch and his brother, the Grand Duke George, are to start towards the end of this month from Corfu on a voyage to India, China, and Japan, terminating at San Francisco.

AN antique Indian slipper, rich with needle-work in golden colours, with its ornate curled-up toe, is a dainty wall pocket to hang at the side of the dressing-table to receive combings.

ON the occasion of the little King Alfonso's first hair-cutting the Queen Regent presented both the nurse and the governess with one of his Majesty's curls.

CANDLE-LIGHT is becoming fashionable, but not that which is shed by the tallow dip. The candle must be "high art" in colour and shape; it will be twisted or fluted, and a choice be taken from sixteen colours and shades.

THE Queen of Roumania's book-cases contain the best known works in the English, French, Russian, Swedish, Dutch, and Roumanian languages, in all of which "Carmen Sylva" is able both to write and converse.

THE mantle of the season is evidently to be that known as the "Paysanne," or "Colleen Bawn." It takes its name from its resemblance to the cloaks worn by Irish peasant women, at least in plays and pictures.

THE King of Italy's health is not good. He has, in fact been very ill lately, and caused much anxiety to his entourage. The Hereditary Prince also is the reverse of well. He is very delicate, but intelligent, and of a most amiable disposition. The Pope, despite reports to the contrary, is fairly well, considering his greatness.

THE propensity of the Czar for long walks is a drawback to the enjoyment of the royalties who go annually to their rendezvous in Denmark. It is not so much that they miss the Czar's company as because he usually singles out a lady from the Royal Court to accompany him; moreover, his Majesty is not a good talker *en route*.

A most convenient and becoming wrap for donning above an evening dress for a moonlight stroll has been invented. It is like a monk's cowl, with a cape which may be gracefully arranged round the shoulders. A beaded tassel attached to the point of the cowl keeps the cape in place. If made in a light material it does not crush the wearer's lace on the most carefully-arranged coiffure.

THE whole of Princess Victoria of Prussia's trousseau is being made in Germany, excepting only four Oriental dresses, which the Empress Frederick ordered during her stay at Athens, and these are being expressly manufactured at the Greek School for Art Weaving. Two of these dresses are white, one fawn, and one pink. A quantity of lace is being made in Silesia for the Princess, and her bridal dress is being made in Berlin at the Royal Art Museum. It is reported that the Emperor William intends to "lend" his sister and her husband the Electoral Palace at Coblenz, which was the favourite residence of the Empress Augusta.

THE European Sovereigns have in general a special taste for the fine arts; the Empress of Austria, the Queen of Italy, the Empress of Russia all pass much of their time in the cultivation of them. Russia owes to the Czarina the quick development which she now enjoys of *les beaux arts*, and which she has done her best to instil into the Czar. Before his marriage he interested himself very little in art; at present, he is the first promoter of it, and is founding a national museum at his own expense. The Empress herself is an excellent artist, and paints very good pictures. Her favourite painter is Meissonier, and during the last fourteen months she has passed many hours each day in copying his two famous pictures, "Porte-drapeau" and "Fameur."

STATISTICS.

A coin is usually, in currency, for twenty-seven years.

A ton of coal yields nearly 10,000 feet of gas.

FIVE million five hundred thousand pills are used in England every day.

THERE are five male convicts to one female convict in English prisons.

IN 1872 the National Debt stood at £792,661,182. In 1885 it stood at £740,330,664. Last year it stood at £698,430,571.

GOLD is fifteen times more valuable than silver now, but in 1660 it was only nine times more costly.

A FRENCH scientist says that in 13 ccs. of cheese there are as many "mites" or microscopic organisms as there are people upon the earth.

THE longest railway tunnel in England is the Standedge tunnel, on the London and North Western line. Its length is 3½ miles. The Watford tunnel is on the London and Birmingham line.

GEMS.

THE noblest and most useful lives are made up of small acts well done.

OUR nature runs either to herbs or weeds; let us seasonably water the one and destroy the other.

INDUSTRY makes a man a purse, and carefulness gives him strings to it. He that has it need only draw the strings as carefulness directs, and he will always find a useful penny at the bottom of it.

THE pleasure that a noble temple gives us is only in part owing to the temple. It is exalted by the beauty of sunlight, the play of the clouds, the landscape around it, its grouping with the houses, trees, and towers in its vicinity.

ALL men who are worth calling men like to wrestle with difficulty. If it does not lie in their way, they go out of their way to find it. There is no excitement in ease and safety, and, without excitement of some kind, we should all rust, body and soul.

CHINESE faith is a daily manifestation of the truth that, on earth, there is nothing great but man; in man there is nothing great but mind. The love of intelligence, the worship and exercise of intellectual power, rules in the administration of every detail of their vast empire.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TO BAKE TOMATOES.—Cut each tomato in halves, season with salt and pepper, and put them skin-side down in a pudding-dish. Cover the top of each with bread crumbs, add a bit of butter, and bake.

RICE GRIDDLE CAKES.—For a small quantity, say one quart bowlful, take two-thirds of rice (cooked) to one-third of flour, three teaspoonfuls of baking powder, sweet milk enough to make it the right consistency, and one egg, well beaten; try on a hot griddle, well greased.

APPLE JELLY.—Four lbs. apples, 1 stalk rhubarb, sugar; wipe and quarter the apples, remove the stalks and the seeds, wipe the rhubarb and cut it up in pieces; put all in a preserving-pan with four bread-potsful of water, and boil gently for a quarter of an hour, or till the apples are quite a mash; pour it then into a pointed jelly-bag, and allow it to drain without pressure. Measure the juice, and to each pint add 1 lb. of sugar; put the preserving-pan on the fire, and bring it to the boil, stirring frequently. Boil for a quarter of an hour, after which skim and pot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Board of Trade was constituted 101 years ago.

VASELINE is good to moisten the hair, and is said also to be good to make it gray.

THE lion is eaten by some African races; Abyssinian taste appreciates the flesh of the rhinoceros, and also that of the elephant.

DURING the past few months China alone has sent us eighty thousand pounds' weight of human hair.

HALSTED STREET, Chicago, is one of the longest streets in the world, being about eighteen miles in length in a perfect straight line.

IT is about as absurd for a person to venture into deep water without knowing how to swim as it would be to jump off the roof of a house without knowing how to fly.

BY order of the German government, all the theatres in Berlin holding more than eight hundred people, must be lighted by electricity before the end of the year, or be permanently closed.

THE oldest newspaper is the *Pekin Gazette*, which was first issued in the year 911 of the Christian era, and has been regularly published since 1351. It is the official organ of the oldest empire in the world, and the Chinese contemplate it with reverence and awe.

TREES that are struck by lightning before rain sets in are generally shattered, while those that are struck after they become wet are only scorched. The wet outside offers a fairly good conductor for the current, is the inference to be drawn from this fact.

THE smallest circular saw in practical use is a tiny disc about the size of a shilling, which is employed for cutting the slits in gold pens. These saws are about as thick as ordinary paper, and revolve some four thousand times per minute. Their high velocity keeps them rigid notwithstanding their fineness.

A GOOD and cheap protector against destructive insects which attack small garden plants, according to a gardening journal, is to place bottomless flower-pots over the plants, admitting air and light from above, but excluding the depredators at the sides. A short piece of pipe-tile, several inches in diameter, answers the same purpose as well.

A FRENCH railway has hit upon a new source of revenue. In future people who accompany their friends to any of the stations on that line to see them off will only be admitted on the platform on payment of a fee of one penny. As this railway is the largest in France a considerable yearly sum is expected to be derived from this source.

THE only queen of to-day who can match the Empress Eugenie's extravagance of former days is the Queen of Portugal, who spends money in the same reckless manner and buys by the wholesale. She does not wait to examine and make her selection before purchasing. She buys all the styles of the day direct from Paris, giving orders for the leading houses to send anything that is new and beautiful, wears what pleases her and casts aside the rest. She has good taste, and when one of these collections of dresses, mantles, hats, gloves, boots, laces, &c., arrives from Paris, she makes a long study of each article, trying on many things, studying the combination with the lines of her figure the colour of her hair, until she gets a harmony perfect in all its details. She is generous and loves to make costly and eccentric gifts, but in that way no one has surpassed the beautiful Queen of Holland. On her husband's recent birthday she presented him with an enormous bouquet of flowers, so heavy that it required several serving men to carry it. As it was brought close to the throne the old king stooped forward to examine it, when amidst the flowers the head of his little infant daughter popped out, to the surprise of the monarch and the amusement of the whole court.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

L. H.—We will find the receipt for you next week.

NURSE NANCY.—You can only squeeze them out.

T. B.—The City of Boston was lost in February, 1870.

JOCK.—The Severn Tunnel is 7,664 yards in length.

SCHOOL GIRL.—Newport, Monmouthshire, is in England.

SWEET SEVENTEEN.—A girl comes of age at twenty-one years.

INQUIRY.—The Great Eastern was launched on the 31st of January, 1858.

J. B.—The Tay Bridge disaster occurred on the 28th of December, 1879.

IGNORANCE.—"Pri-me-val," with the accent on the second syllable.

DICK.—Microscopes were invented by Jansen, in Holland, about 1590.

STYLIA.—Arthur Wellesley Peel is the Speaker of the House of Commons.

IN DIFFICULTY.—If you remove the furniture secretly, the landlord can follow and seize it.

PEACH.—Peaches were introduced from this country into Persia about 1562.

ERIC.—Abergavenny is in Monmouthshire. Wills for that county are proved at Llandaff.

APPRENTICE.—An apprentice or his parents must pay for the preparation of his indentures.

LADDER.—Guardians appointed under a will can apprentice a boy placed under their charge.

IGNORANCE.—A billion is a million of millions, ten hundred thousand millions, 1,000,000,000,000.

NORA.—You can obtain the return of the watch by paying the debt and interest.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—The father would be entitled to the custody of the children if they are not of tender age.

BROKENHEARTED ONE.—Promises during an engagement can be recovered if the engagement is broken off.

FRANK.—The mover of a resolution has a right to speak also upon any amendment which is moved to it.

NEP (Wardley).—Bristol is chiefly in Gloucestershire, but partly in Somersetshire.

BRUTUS (Hanley).—The dog license was raised from 5s. to 7s. 6d. on the 1st of June, 1878.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—A lodger's goods cannot be seized for rent or rates due by the tenants of the house.

ELAINE.—1. The Great Western Railway is worked on the broad-gauge system. 2. Yes.

J. T. B.—The English law does not allow a husband to put his wife into the workhouse for misconduct.

JOE.—The only crimes for which capital punishment can be awarded are murder and high treason.

CLARENCE.—The mole has eyes, but they are very small. Its senses of hearing and smell are very sharp.

INDIGNATION.—You must not remove a fence, even if erected by yourself, without the permission of the landlord.

MISERY.—The only remedy we can suggest for this sad case is that the lady should throw herself upon the parish.

SAPPHO.—In "Men of the Time" there are notices of both, but we have not seen separate or distinct biographies.

HEAD-UP ANNE.—A domestic servant is not entitled to her wages during the time she is incapacitated by illness.

POLLY.—Francis Kent was murdered by his sister Constance, at Road, on the night of the 29th of June, 1860.

VENTS.—Madame Rachel's preparation was never made public. At her trial it was vaguely referred to as an enamel.

HARRY'S DARLING.—1. The 10th Hussars are at York, both headquarters and depot. 2. No light cavalry regiment in British service wears a scarlet coat.

CONSTANT READER.—There was a plague of locusts in London in 1748, and they are said to have been seen there again in 1857.

GORDON.—Phœbus was the author of several books of Latin fables in verse. He lived in the early years of the Roman Empire.

UNHAPPY JANE.—A wife cannot be compelled to contribute towards her husband's support unless he becomes chargeable to the parish.

JURILEK.—What you have is one of the many medals struck to commemorate the Queen's marriage. It is of no value, except as a curiosity.

DUNCAN.—The Island of Heligoland is in the German Ocean, off the German coast, in a straight line from Grimsby.

FRANCIS.—We are not able to give you the etymology or the origin of the word "shebeen." It is of foreign birth and comparatively recent importation, we think; probably a corruption of "shebang," a current Yankee phrase descriptive usually of a low drinking saloon, and itself a corruption of a French phrase.

A MAN OF SORROWS.—We thank you for your courteous letter, and are glad to find that our paper is acceptable to you. We cannot comply with your request, as it is against our rules to publish authors' names.

POLLY.—It is not compulsory to have a will made by a lawyer, but it is always better and safer to have legal advice and assistance in doing it. Mistakes are apt to be made by persons drawing up their own wills, which entail much trouble and expense on their heirs.

BESSIE.—From what you say we quite conclude the cause. As you get stronger you will get better, so do not be disheartened about it; but you must see a medical man. Call at some hospital. Above all, do not delay, as otherwise you will go from bad to worse.

MILES.—If a young lady "tries on" a ring belonging to you, and forgets to take it off or return it, it would be quite proper for you to remind her of it, and even squarely to ask her for the ring. You should, of course, do it politely, and in the kindest possible manner.

CHARIBEL.—We say that in our opinion, it would be improper for a man to marry within six months after the death of his former wife; and that we should hesitate to confide in the enduring affection of a man or woman who should allow himself or herself such unseemly haste.

THE BRIGHT SIDE.

If one looks on the bright side,
It is sure to be on the right side—
At least that's how I've found it as I've journeyed
through each day;
And it's queer how shadows vanish,
And how easy 'tis to banish
From a bright side sort of nature every doleful thing
away.

There are two sides to the question,
As we know; so the suggestion
Of the side which holds the sunlight seems most reason-
able to me.
And you know we can't be merry,
And make our surroundings cheery,
If we will insist in coddling every gloomy thing we see.

There's a sensible quotation,
Which will fit in every station—
We all know it; "As the twig is bent, so is the tree
inclined."
And the twigs of thought we're bending,
If to ways of gloom we're tending,
Will be pretty sure to twist and dwarf and quite deform
the mind.

There's a way of searching over
The wide skies till we discover
Whether storms are on the way, or the weather that we
love;
And the blues may be hiding
Back of clouds that swift are riding,
Yet we know that blue is shining still, and spreading
far above;

And while that will last for ever,
(For the true blue fades never),
The dark clouds must soon or later be dispersed and
fade away;
And the sweet "bright side" still shining,
Will meet the eyes inclining
To watch for it and welcome it, however dark the day.

So, my friends, let's choose the bright side,
Just the happy, glorious right side,
Which will give us health and spirits just as long as life
shall last;
And the sorrows that roll o'er us,
Shall not always go before us,
If we keep watch for blue skies, and will hold its sun-
shine fast.

SADLY NELL.—1. If they are legally married there is no occasion to again go through the ceremony. 2. A little disarrangement, not unusual in children, that a slight mixture from the chemist should put right.

R. L. B.—You must invest in Government stocks, the largest sum receivable in deposit in any year being £30. There is a very little more formality in selling out the stocks than in "lifting" money from a bank, but the money is practically at call. You can depend upon having it whenever you want it.

ETIQUETTE.—Etiquette requires that a gentleman should lift his hat to a lady who is walking with a gentleman known to him, even though he may not know the lady. He says in effect, my friendship for the gentleman compels me to respect the lady who honours him with her confidence or favour.

CARRIE.—The first set of teeth in the human jaws numbers twenty; ten in each jaw. The second set when full has thirty-two, or sixteen in each jaw. The teeth are never any larger than when they first come through the gums. The second teeth which take their place are larger in conformity with the growth of the jaws.

GWINDOLINE.—It is not "absolutely necessary" to wear black when paying a first visit to a house of mourning, but it is certainly in better taste and more in harmony with the surroundings to avoid a display of brilliant colours. Every lady is supposed to possess a black dress, and on such an occasion she can appropri-
ately wear it.

ONE IN DOUBT.—The man is a contemptible rogue, take our word for it. Write at once, saying if he does not pay without further delay you will write to his employer and ask his assistance in obtaining the money. As long as he finds he can pay you with promises the fellow will not produce a farthing of the money he owes.

HIS LORDSHIP.—The harpoon which is fired from a small cannon in the bow of a whale-boat is a short bar of iron, with a chain and ring at the end to fasten the rope to. The bomb-lance is now more generally in use in whale-fishing. It is a pointed cast-iron tube filled with gunpowder, which is fired from a gun. The bomb bursts inside the body of the whale, causing a dull sound, and the victim turning a somersault expires very soon if not at once.

CHARLIE.—If you "really loved" the young lady in question you would never contemplate such abandon-ment of her as you mention, nor would you refer to her in such a disrespectful manner. A man who has the love of a young lady and the good wishes of her mother and all the rest of the family, excepting the father only, ought to be able to carry his point without anything more onerous than the exercise of proper patience, decency, and discretion.

VESTA.—A man who habitually indulges in the habit of telling white lies, will very soon take to telling yellow ones, and may promote himself to black ones. It is true, that some people find it difficult to refrain from such light-coloured mendacity, but that is no excuse for them. In their opinion, truth is not stranger than fiction, and hence they draw the long bow, seeking the excitement they require, and which fact cannot supply, in the incredible. The effect on their moral nature is deplorable.

ANXIOUS TO KNOW.—1. You have the same food and same accommodation in every sense on an assisted passage as is given to those who pay full rates, the difference being that the Government pays your passage for the sake of securing your services to the colonies. We are not, however, able to say what sum is being charged at present, but write direct to the Queensland Agent-General, Victoria-chambers, Victoria-street, London, E.W., and you will get full information. 2. Yes, March will do. The best of summer is over then.

G. A. D.—Pottery is anything made of baked clay, and it is divided into three kinds: on the ware, stone-ware, and porcelain or china. Earthenware is soft and porous, stoneware hard and close-grained, and porcelain hard and fine-grained. All the fine table ware is usually called china, because the first was brought from China. The elegant vases made at Sèvres and Dresden are of porcelain, the exact meaning of which word is not known. The earliest mention of porcelain in Chinese literature indicates the date of its discovery to be the second century B.C.

AN OLD MAID.—Grosvenor-square, London, was ac-
called from Sir Richard Grosvenor. It has an area of six acres, and is one of the most aristocratic quarters in London. Grosvenor House is the city residence of the Marquis of Westminster. Formerly, as Gloucester House, it was inhabited by the Duke of Gloucester, brother of George III. It contains a very fine collection of paintings—the celebrated Grosvenor Gallery—in-
cluding some of the best works of Claude and Rubens. Byron, Macaulay, and other English writers, make mention of Grosvenor-square in their works.

GILBERT.—You are just old enough for roughing it, but if you have a little money in your pocket to keep you going till Johannesburg settles into a regular way of living, you may get on well enough there. Mean-
time, the place has been "rushed." Labour is far in excess of the demand. After a time, things will shake themselves into shape, building and other trades will go on in line with the progress of the goldfields, and then money may be made by those who are on the spot; but do not forget that it will cost you close on £40 to reach Johannesburg, and probably as much more to keep you going till trade is in shape.

MONICA.—Perhaps if you would cultivate cheerfulness of temper you would find that your domestic burdens would rest less heavily. A woman who allows her temper frequently to go on the rampage, and who frets and scolds about trifles, very much increases her troubles, and not only hers but her husband's and her children's also. "The tongue of a scolding woman is like a sandy way to weary feet," says the Oriental writer—a metaphor which was probably ground out of his very soul by the scoldings of some Hebrew Xanthippe, after he has traversed the Libyan Desert on foot, and come home without bringing his wife a new turban—or a sealskin saque!

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